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THE

WORKS

Y1392

Of the MOST REVEREND

Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON,

LATE

Lord Archbiſhop of CANTERBURY.

IN TEN VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

EDINBURGH and GLASGOW:

Printed for G. HAMILTON & J. BALFOUR, W. SANDS, J. TRAILL, W. MILLER, and J. BROWN, *Edinburgh*; A. STALKER, *Glaſgow*; and T. GLAS, *Dundee*.

MDCCXLVIII.

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T O

His Sacred Majesty

King W I L L I A M,

T H E S E

S E R M O N S

A R E

Most Humbly Dedicated,

By the Author's Relict,

Eliz. Tillotson.

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THE PUBLISHER TO THE READER.

THE author of these sermons was so well known, particularly for his most excellent and useful discourses from the pulpit, that I shall not attempt, by any thing I can say, to recommend them to the publick. I know very well, they have already that credit in the world, which will render any apology needless; especially when, by this publication of them, they shall speak for themselves.

I think it requisite, only to assure the reader, that they are what they pretend to be, the genuine works of that great man.

Whilst I had the happiness of conversing with him, he was pleased (at my request) to instruct me in the character *in which he wrote all his sermons: and some of these now published, having been transcribed by me some years since, were found amongst his papers, corrected with his own hand.*

By what he had been pleased to say, that I was master of his character, *and by the few* errata *he observed in my first performance, I was encouraged to set about this work: in which I can solemnly profess, that I have observed a religious care and strictness, neither to omit nor add any thing,*

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but an of, *a* the, *or the like, when the ſenſe plainly required it; and of that too I have given notice, by affixing this mark* (") *upon the word which I did not find in the original; ſo that the reader is left to judge of the fitneſs of ſuch additions; which, after all, are ſo very few and inconſiderable, as ſcarcely to deſerve this notice; only that he might be ſatisfied (in caſe the printer do his part) that he hath here, what he expects, a perfect tranſcript of theſe ſermons; and in them a true and lively ſtrain of Chriſtian piety and eloquence, ſo fitted to all capacities, that I cannot but hope, all that ſhall read them will be the better for them, even thoſe not excepted (if there be any ſuch) who may have entertained any unreaſonable prejudices againſt them, or their Moſt Reverend author.*

I have always thought, and often ſaid it, that if any were leavened with prejudice againſt him, they were, to be ſure, ſuch as did not know him; and the farther I go in his writings, the more I am aſſured that it muſt be ſo.

Lambeth, April 2.
1695.

RA. BARKER.

The

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SERMON LV.

Of sincerity towards God and man.

Preached at Kingston, July 29. 1694.
The last his Grace preached.

JOHN i. 47.

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.

WHO this Nathanael was, upon whom our Saviour bestows this extraordinary character, doth not certainly appear, his name being but once more mentioned in the whole history of the gospel. For certain, he was a good man, who deserved this extraordinary commendation; and none but our Saviour, who knew what was in man, and needed not that any should tell him, could have given it, especially of one whom he had never seen before that time: for when *Jesus saw him coming to him, he saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed.*

The whole nation of the Jews were Israelites by natural descent, being the seed of Jacob or Israel; but in a special and more excellent sense, none are esteemed the true posterity of Israel, but those who resembled this father of their nation in true piety and goodness: for, as the Apostle reasons, *they are not all Israel who are of Israel.* They only are *Israelites indeed* who resemble good old Jacob, in the sincerity of his piety, and the simplicity of his temper and disposition: for our Saviour seems here to allude to that character which is given of Jacob, Gen. xxv. 27. that *he was a plain man;* or, as the Hebrew word signifies, *a perfect and sincere man;* in opposition to his brother Esau, who is said to be *cunning.* So that to be *an Israelite indeed,* is to be a downright honest man, without fraud and guile, without any arts of hypocrisy and deceit.

In speaking of this virtue of sincerity, which is the

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higheſt character and commendation of a good man, I ſhall conſider it as it reſpects God and man. As it reſpects God, ſo it imports the truth and ſincerity of our piety and devotion towards him. As it regards men, ſo it ſignifies a ſimplicity of mind and manners, in our carriage and converſation one towards another. Both theſe are included, and very probably were intended, in the character which our Saviour here gives of Nathanael.

I. I ſhall conſider this grace or virtue of ſincerity as it reſpects God. And ſo it imports the truth and ſincerity of our piety towards him; that we heartily believe, and fear, and honour him; and that the outward expreſſions of our piety and obedience to him, are the genuine iſſue of our inward apprehenſions of him, and affections towards him. And this no doubt our Saviour intended, in the firſt place, in the character of this good man, that he was a man of a real, and ſubſtantial, and unaffected piety, and in truth what he appeared to be; that he did ſincerely love God and his truth, and was ready to embrace it, whenever it was fairly propoſed to him; as did plainly appear in his carriage towards our Saviour: for when Philip invited him to *come and ſee him*, he did not conceal the prejudice and objection he had againſt him, grounded upon a common, but uncharitable proverb, that *out of Nazareth ariſeth no prophet*; but having an honeſt and ſincere mind, he was not ſo carried away by a popular prejudice, as not to have patience to be better informed; and therefore was eaſily perſuaded to *go and ſee* our Saviour, and to diſcourſe with him himſelf; and being ſatisfied that he was the Meſſias, he preſently owns him for ſuch, calling him *the Son of God*, and *the King of Iſrael*. And becauſe ſincerity is the very heart and ſubſtance of religion, it concerns us not only to endeavour after this temper and diſpoſition, but to inquire into the nature and properties of it, that we may know when we have it, and may have the comfort of it. I ſhall mention five or ſix properties of a ſincere piety, by which men may ſufficiently know the integrity of their hearts towards God.

1. Our piety is then ſincere, when the chief reaſons and predominant motives of it are religious. And I call that a religious or rational motive, which regards God and another

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another world, in opposition to men, and to our present temporal advantages; when the principal and swaying motives of our piety are, a sense of God's authority over us, and of our duty and obligation to him; a fear of his displeasure and threatenings, and the hopes of the glorious reward which he hath promised to obedience. These motives are properly religious, because they respect God, and are the arguments to obedience which he himself offers to us, to persuade us to our duty; and that is a sincere piety which is wrought in us by these considerations, how unequally soever mixed: for even in the most of men, fear does many times prevail more than love, and, in case of great temptation, may preserve men from sin, when perhaps no other consideration will do it. On the contrary, that is an unsincere piety to which we are moved merely by the regard of men, and the consideration of some temporal advantages. And when these have the chief influence upon us, it is easy for any man to discern in himself; for he that will carefully observe himself, can hardly be ignorant of the true spring and motive of his own actions. But there is one sign whereby a man may certainly know that his heart is not right towards God; and that is, if when these motives are absent, our piety and zeal for the true religion doth either cease, or is sensibly cooled and abated: As, if impiety, or Popery, or any thing else that is bad, begin to be in fashion, and to have the countenance of great examples; if those whom we fear, and upon whom we depend, do discover any inclination that way; if the garb of religion cease to be for our interest, or, in the revolution of things, happen to be contrary to it: if in any of these cases we let fall the profession of our religion, or neglect the practice of it, this is a plain and undeniable demonstration of the insincerity of our former piety.

2. A sincere piety must be rooted in the heart, and be a living principle within us: for, as the Apostle reasons in another case, *he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; but he who is one inwardly*, and in *the heart*: and without this, all outward acts of piety and devotion are hypocrisy, a picture of religion, and *a form of godliness*, without the life and *power of it*.

3. A third evidence of a sincere piety is, when men are

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religious in private and in secret, as well as in publick, and in the open view of men. He is truly devout, who is so in his family, and in his closet, where he hath no witness but God and his own soul, as well as in the church. He is a downright honest man, who will make good his word, and perform his promise, when no proof can be made of it, and no law compel him to it, as readily as if there had been an hundred witnesses of it. He is sincerely just, who will not detain from another his right, though he be ignorant of it; nor wrong any man, though he could do it with all the secrecy and safety in the world; who will not impose upon another's ignorance or unskilfulness, though never so much to his own benefit and advantage. He is truly charitable, who would not only as soon, but rather sooner, give his alms in secret, than in the sight of men: and he is truly grateful, who, when there is occasion and opportunity, will acknowledge a kindness and requite a benefit to the relations of his deceased friend, though he be sure that all memory of the obligation died with him, and that none are conscious of it but God and his own conscience. And indeed there is scarce any act of piety and virtue, the sincerity of which may not by this evidence be known by us: as, on the contrary, a man may for certain conclude himself a hypocrite, if he be not the same in the presence of God and his own conscience, that he is in the sight of men.

4. Another evidence of a sincere piety is, a constant tenor of goodness in the general course of our lives. I do not now speak of the first beginnings of piety in new converts; which are many times very imperfect, and such as afford little or no evidence of a man's sincerity; but in those who have made any considerable progress in goodness. The habits of any known sin, and the wilful and deliberate neglect of our duties, and even the single acts of more heinous crimes, will bring in question our sincerity; and are by no means to be sheltered under the name of infirmity: for these the grace of God, if we be not wanting to ourselves, will enable us to subdue; and he is not sincerely good who doth not seriously endeavour to be as good as he can, and does not make use of that grace which God is ready to afford, to all the purposes, though

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though not of a perfect, yet of a sincere obedience to the laws of God.

5. Another evidence of a sincere piety is, that our obedience to God be uniform and universal, equally respecting all the laws of God, and every part of our duty; that it do not content itself with an especial regard to some precepts of the law, though never so considerable, and allow itself in the breach or neglect of the rest; no nor with observing the duties of one table of the law, if it overlook the other; no nor with obedience to all the commandments of God, one only excepted. St. James puts this case; and determines, that *he that keeps the whole law, saving that he offends in one point, is guilty of all;* that is, is not sincere in his obedience to the rest. And therefore we must take great heed, that we do not set the commandments of God at odds, and dash the two tables of the law against one another, lest, as St. James says, we *break the whole law.* And yet I fear this is too common a fault, even amongst those who make a great profession of piety, that they are not sufficiently sensible of the obligation and necessity of the duties of the second table, and of the excellency of those graces and virtues which respect our carriage and conversation with one another. Men do not seem to consider, that God did not give laws to us for his own sake, but ours; and therefore that he did not only design that we should honour him, but that we should be happy in one another: for which reason he joins with our humble and dutiful deportment towards himself, the offices of justice and charity towards others: *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah vi. 8.; *And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also,* 1 John iv. 21. And yet it is too visible, that many who make a great profession of piety towards God, are very defective in moral duties; very unpeaceable and turbulent in their spirits, very peevish and passionate, very conceited and censorious, as if their profession of godliness did exempt them from the care and practice of Christian virtues. But we must not so fix our eye upon heaven, as to forget that we walk upon the earth, and to neglect the ordering of our steps

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and converſation among men, leſt, while we are gazing upon the ſtars, we fall into the ditch of groſs and foul immorality.

It is very poſſible, that men may be devout and zealous in religion, very nice and ſcrupulous about the worſhip and ſervice of God; and yet, becauſe of their palpable defect in points of juſtice and honeſty, of meekneſs and humility, of peace and charity, may be groſs and odious hypocrites. For men muſt not think, for ſome acts, either of outward or inward piety, to compound with God for the neglect of mercy and judgment, or to demand it as a right from men to be excuſed from the great duties and virtues of human converſation; or pretend to be above them, becauſe they relate chiefly to this world, and to the temporal happineſs of men; as if it were the privilege of great devotion, to give a licence to men to be peeviſh and froward, ſowre and moroſe, ſupercilious and cenſorious, in their behaviour towards others. Men muſt have a great care, that they be not intent upon the outward parts of religion, to the prejudice of inward and real goodneſs; and that they do not ſo uſe the means of religion, as to neglect and loſe the main end of it; that they do not place all religion in faſting and outward mortification: for though theſe things be very uſeful and neceſſary in their place, if they be diſcreetly managed, and made ſubſervient to the great ends of religion; yet it is often ſeen, that men have ſo unequal a reſpect to the ſeveral parts of their duty, that faſting and corporal ſeverity, thoſe meagre and lean duties of piety, in compariſon, do, like Pharaoh's *lean kine, devour and eat up* almoſt all *the goodly and well-favoured*, the great and ſubſtantial duties of the Chriſtian life: and therefore men muſt take great heed, leſt, while they are ſo intent upon mortifying themſelves, they do not mortify virtue and good nature, humility, and meekneſs, and charity; things highly valuable in themſelves, and amiable in the eyes of men, and in the ſight of God of great price.

For the neglect of the moral duties of the ſecond table is not only a mighty ſcandal to religion, but of pernicious conſequence many other ways. A fierce and ill-governed, an ignorant and injudicious zeal for the honour of God, and ſomething or other belonging neceſſarily,

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sarily, as they think, to his true worship and service, hath made many men do many unreasonable, immoral, and impious things; of which history will furnish us with innumerable instances, in the practice of the Jesuits, and other zealots of the church of Rome. And there are not wanting too many examples of this kind amongst ourselves. For men that are not sober and considerate in their religion, but give themselves up to the conduct of blind prejudice and furious zeal, do easily persuade themselves, that any thing is lawful which they strongly fancy to tend to the honour of God, and to the advancement of the cause of religion. Hence some have proceeded to that height of absurdity, in their zeal for their religion and church, as to think it not only lawful, but highly commendable and meritorious, to equivocate upon oath, and break faith with hereticks, and to destroy all those that differ from them; as if it were piety in some cases to lie for the truth, and to kill men for God's sake.

So that if we would approve the integrity of our hearts to God, and evidence to ourselves the sincerity of our obedience, we ought impartially to regard all the laws of God, and every part of our duty; and if we do not, our heart is not upright with God. It is observable, that *sincerity* in scripture is often called by the name of *integrity*, and *perfection*; because it is integrated and made up of all the parts of our duty.

6. The last evidence I shall mention of the sincerity of our religion, is, if it hold out against persecution, and endure the fiery trial. This is the utmost proof of our integrity, when we are called to bear the cross, to be willing then to expose all our worldly interest, and even life itself, for the cause of God and religion. This is a trial which God doth not always call his faithful servants to; but they are always to be prepared for it in the purpose and resolution of their minds. This our Saviour makes the great mark of a true disciple: *If any man* (saith he) *will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* This is a certain sign, that men have *received the word into good ground*, and are well rooted in their religion, when they are not shaken by these fierce assaults: for many (as our Saviour tells us)

hear

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hear the word, and with joy receive it; but having not root in themselves, they endure but for a while; and when persecution or tribulation ariseth, because of the word, presently they are offended: nay some, when they see persecution coming at a distance, wheel off, and bethink themselves of making their retreat in time, and of *agreeing with their adversary whilst he is yet in the way.*

So that constancy to our religion in case of danger, and suffering for it, is the best proof of our sincerity. This is *the fiery trial*, as the scripture calls it, which will try what materials we are made of, and whether we love God and his truth in sincerity.

And thus I have considered sincerity as it respects God, and imports true piety and religion towards him. And I proceed to the second consideration,

II. Of sincerity as it regards men. And so it signifies a simplicity of mind and manners in our conversation, and carriage one towards another; singleness of heart, discovering itself in a constant plainness and honest openness of behaviour; free from all insidious devices, and little tricks, and fetches of craft and cunning; from all false appearances, and deceitful disguises of ourselves, in word or action: or, yet more plainly, it is to speak as we think, and do what we pretend and profess; to perform and make good what we promise; and, in a word, really to be what we would seem and appear to be.

Not that we are obliged to tell every man all our mind; but we are never to declare any thing contrary to it. We may be silent, and conceal as much of ourselves, as prudence, or any other good reason, requires; but we must not put on a disguise, and make a false appearance and empty shew of what we are not, either by word or action. Contrary to this virtue is, I fear, most of that compliment which is current in conversation; and which, for the most part, is nothing but words, to fill up the gaps and supply the emptiness of discourse; and a pretence to that kindness and esteem for persons, which either in truth we have not, or not to that degree which our expressions seem to import: which, if done with design, is that which we call flattery; a very odious sort of insincerity: and so much the worse, because it abuseth men into a vain and foolish opinion of themselves,

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selves, and an ill-grounded confidence of the kindness and good-will of others towards them: and so much the more dangerous, because it hath a party within us, which is ready to let it in: it plays upon our self-love, which greedily catcheth at any thing that tends to magnify and advance us; for, God knows, we are all too apt to think and make the best of our bad selves; so that very few tempers have wisdom and firmness enough to be proof against flattery: it requires great consideration, and a resolute modesty and humility, to resist the insinuations of this serpent; yea, a little rudeness and moroseness of nature, a prudent distrust and infidelity in mankind, to make a man in good earnest to reject and despise it.

Now, besides that all hypocrisy and insincerity is mean in itself, having falshood at the bottom; it is also often made use of, to the prejudice of others, in their rights and interests. For not only dissimulation is contrary to sincerity, because it consists in a vain shew of what we are not, in a false muster of our virtues and good qualities, in a deceitful representation and undue character of our lives: but there are likewise other qualities and actions more inconsistent with integrity, which are of a more injurious and mischievous consequence to our nature; as falshood, and fraud, and perfidiousness, and infinite little crafts and arts of deceit, which men practise upon one another in their ordinary conversation and intercourse. The former is great vanity; but this is gross iniquity.

And yet these qualities dexterously managed, so as not to lie too plain and open to discovery, are looked upon by many, as signs of great depth and shrewdness, admirable instruments of business, and necessary means for the compassing our own ends and designs: and though in those that have suffered by them, and felt the mischief of them, they are always accounted dishonest; yet, among the generality of lookers-on, they pass for great policy; as if the very skill of governing and managing human affairs did consist in these little tricks and devices. But he that looks more narrowly into them, and will but have the patience to observe the end of them, will find them to be great follies; and that it is only for want of true wisdom and understanding, that men

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men *turn aſide to tricks*, and *make diſſimulation and lies their refuge*. It is Solomon's obſervation, that *he that walketh uprightly, walketh ſurely; but the folly of fools is deceit. The folly of fools*; that is, the moſt egregious piece of folly that any man can be guilty of, is to play the knave. The vulgar tranſlation renders this clauſe a little otherwiſe, but yet towards the ſame ſenſe; *ſed ſtultus divertit ad dolos*; "but the fool turns aſide to "tricks:" to make uſe of theſe, is a ſign the man wants underſtanding to ſee the plain and direct way to his end. I will not deny, but theſe little arts may ſerve a preſent turn, and perhaps ſucceſsfully enough: but true wiſdom goes deep, and reacheth a great way farther; looking to the end of things, and regarding the future as well as the preſent; and, by judging upon the whole matter, and ſum of affairs, doth clearly diſcern that craft and cunning are only uſeful for the preſent occaſion; whereas integrity is of a laſting uſe, and will be ſerviceable to us upon all occaſions, and in the whole courſe of our lives: and that diſſimulation and deceit, though they may do ſome preſent execution in buſineſs, yet they recoil upon a man terribly afterwards, ſo as to make him ſtagger, and by degrees to weaken, and at laſt to deſtroy his reputation; which is a much more uſeful, and ſubſtantial, and laſting inſtrument of proſperity and ſucceſs in human affairs, than any tricks and devices whatſoever. Thus have I conſidered this great virtue of ſincerity, both as it regards God, and the mutual converſation and intercourſe of men one with another.

And now having explained the nature of ſincerity to God and man, by declaring the properties of it, and in what inſtances we ought chiefly to practiſe it, and what things are contrary to it; that which remains is, to perſuade men to endeavour after this excellent quality, and to practiſe it in all the words and actions of their lives.

Let us then, in the firſt place, be ſincere in our religion, and ſerve God in truth and uprightneſs of heart, out of conſcience of our duty, and obligations to him; and not with ſiniſter reſpects to our private intereſt or paſſion, to the publick approbation or cenſure of men. Let us never make uſe of religion to ſerve any baſe and unworthy

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unworthy ends; cloking our designs of covetousness, or ambition, or revenge, with pretences of conscience, and zeal for God: and let us endeavour after the reality of religion; always remembering, that a sincere piety doth not consist in shew, but substance; not in appearance, but in effect: that the spirit of true religion is still and calm, charitable and peaceable; making as little shew and stir as is possible: that a truly and sincerely good man does not affect vain ostentation, and an unseasonable discovery of his good qualities; but endeavours rather really to be, than to seem religious, and, of the two, rather seeks to conceal his piety, than to set it out with pomp; gives his alms privately; prays to God in secret; and makes no appearance of religion, but in such fruits and effects as cannot be hid; in the quiet and silent virtues of humility, and meekness, and patience, of peace and charity; in governing his passions, and taking heed not to offend with his tongue, by slander and calumny, by envious detraction or rash censure, or by any word or action that may be to the hurt and prejudice of his neighbour. But, on the contrary, it is a very ill sign, if a man affect to make a great noise and bustle about religion; if he blow a trumpet before his good works, and by extraordinary shews of devotion summon the eyes of men to behold him, and do as it were call aloud to them to take notice of his piety, and to *come and see his zeal for the Lord of hosts*. It is not impossible but such a man, with all his vanity and ostentation, may have some real goodness in him: but he is *as the hypocrites are*, and does as like one as is possible; and by the mighty shew that he makes, to wise and considerate men, greatly brings in question the sincerity of his religion.

And with the sincerity of our piety towards God, let us join the simplicity and integrity of manners in our conversation with men. Let us strictly charge ourselves to use truth and plainness in all our words and doings; let our tongue be ever the true interpreter of our mind, and our expressions the lively image of our thoughts and affections, and our outward actions exactly agreeable to our inward purposes and intentions.

Amongst too many other instances of the great corruption

ruption and degeneracy of the age wherein we live, the great and general want of ſincerity in converſation is none of the leaſt. The world is grown ſo full of diſſimulation and compliment, that mens words are hardly any ſignification of their thoughts; and if any man meaſure his words by his heart, and ſpeak as he thinks, and do not expreſs more kindneſs to every man, than men uſually have for any man, he can hardly eſcape the cenſure of rudeneſs, and want of breeding. The old Engliſh plainneſs and ſincerity, that generous integrity of nature, and honeſty of diſpoſition, which always argues true greatneſs of mind, and is uſually accompanied with undaunted courage and reſolution, is in a great meaſure loſt among us; there hath been a long endeavour to transform us into foreign manners and faſhions, and to bring us to a ſervile imitation of none of the beſt of our neighbours, in ſome of the worſt of their qualities. The dialect of converſation is now-a-days ſo ſwelled with vanity and compliment, and ſo ſurfeited (as I may ſay) with expreſſions of kindneſs and reſpect, that if a man that lived an age or two ago, ſhould return into the world again, he would really want a dictionary to help him to underſtand his own language, and to know the true intrinſick value of the phraſe in faſhion; and would hardly, at firſt, believe at what a low rate the higheſt ſtrains and expreſſions of kindneſs imaginable do commonly paſs in current payment: and when he ſhould come to underſtand it, it would be a great while before he could bring himſelf, with a good countenance and a good conſcience, to converſe with men upon equal terms, and in their own way.

And, in truth, it is hard to ſay, whether it ſhould more provoke our contempt or our pity, to hear what ſolemn expreſſions of reſpect and kindneſs will paſs between men, almoſt upon no occaſion; how great honour and eſteem they will declare for one whom perhaps they never heard of or ſaw before, and how entirely they are all on the ſudden devoted to his ſervice and intereſt, for no reaſon; how infinitely and eternally obliged to him, for no benefit; and how extremely they will be concerned for him, yea and afflicted too, for no cauſe. I know it is ſaid in juſtification of this hollow kind of converſation,

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converſation, that there is no harm, no real deceit in compliment, but the matter is well enough, ſo long as we underſtand one another: *Et verba valent ut nummi;* "Words are like money;" and when the current value of them is generally underſtood, no man is cheated by them. This is ſomething, if ſuch words were any thing; but being brought into the account, they are mere cyphers. However, it is ſtill a juſt matter of complaint, that ſincerity and plainneſs are out of faſhion, and that our language is running into a lie; that men have almoſt quite perverted the uſe of ſpeech, and made words to ſignify nothing; that the greateſt part of the converſation of mankind, and of their intercourſe with one another, is little elſe but driving a trade of diſſimulation; inſomuch that it would make a man heartily ſick and weary of the world, to ſee the little ſincerity that is in uſe and practice among men, and tempt him to break out into that melancholy complaint and wiſh of the Prophet, Jer. ix. 2. 3. 4. 6. 8. 9. *Oh that I had in the wilderneſs a lodging-place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them: for they are all adulterers, an aſſembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies; but have no courage for the truth upon the earth. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and truſt ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly ſupplant, and every neighbour will walk with ſlanders. Thine habitation is in the midſt of deceit. One ſpeaketh peaceably to his neighbour, but in his heart he lieth in wait. Shall not I viſit for theſe things? ſaith the Lord; and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged of ſuch a nation as this?*

Such were the manners of the people of Iſrael at that time, which were both the forerunner and the cauſe of thoſe terrible calamities which befel them afterwards. And this character agrees but too well to the preſent age, which is ſo wretchedly void of truth and ſincerity: for which reaſon there is the greater need to recommend this virtue to us, which ſeems to be fled from us, that *truth and righteouſneſs may return, and glory may dwell in our land; and God may ſhew his mercy upon us, and grant us his ſalvation; and righteouſneſs and peace may kiſs each other.* To this end give me leave to offer theſe following conſiderations.

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1. That sincerity is the highest commendation and the very best character that can be given of any man; it is the solid foundation of all virtue, the heart and soul of all piety and goodness: it is in scripture called *perfection*, and frequently joined with it; and throughout the Bible there is the greatest stress and weight laid upon it; it is spoken of as the sum and comprehension of all religion: *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth*, says Joshua to the people of Israel, Josh. xxiv. 14. God takes great pleasure in it; so David assures us, 1 Chron. xxix. 17. *I know, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness:* and again, *Thou lovest truth in the inward parts.*

To this disposition of mind the promises of divine favour and blessing are particularly made, Psal. xv. 1. 2. *Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth from his heart.* Psal. xxxii. 2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

And it is observable, that this character of our Saviour here given of Nathanael, is the only full and perfect commendation that we read was ever given by him of any particular person. He commends some particular acts of piety and virtue in others, as St. Peter's confession of him, the faith of the Centurion, and of the woman that was healed by touching the hem of his garment, the charity of the woman that cast her two mites into the treasury, and the bounty of that other devout woman who poured upon him a box of precious ointment: but here he gives the particular character of a good man, when he says of Nathanael, that he was *an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile.* And the Apostle mentions this quality, as the chief ingredient into the character of the best man that ever was, our blessed Saviour, *who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*

2. The rarity of this virtue is a farther commendation of it. A sincerely pious and good man, without any guile or disguise, is not a sight to be seen every day. Our Saviour in the text speaks of it as a thing very extraordinary, and of special remark and observation, and breaks out into some kind of wonder upon the occasion,

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as if to see a man of perfect integrity and simplicity were an occurrence very rare and unusual, and such as calls for our more especial attention and regard: *Behold* (saith he) *an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.*

3. The want of sincerity will quite spoil the virtue and acceptance of all our piety and obedience, and certainly deprive us of the reward of it. All that we do in the service of God, all our external obedience to his laws, if not animated by sincerity, is like a sacrifice without a heart, which is an abomination to the Lord.

4. Hypocrisy and insincerity is a very vain and foolish thing; it is designed to cheat others, but is in truth a deceiving of ourselves. No man would flatter or dissemble, did he believe he were seen and discovered: an open knave is a great fool, who destroys at once both his design and reputation. And this is the case of every hypocrite; all the disagreement which is between his tongue and his thoughts, his actions and his heart, is open to that eye from which nothing can be hid: for *the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.*

5. Truth and reality have all the advantages of appearance, and many more. If the shew of any thing be good for any thing, I am sure sincerity is better: for why does any man dissemble, or seem to be that which he is not, but because he thinks it good to have such a quality as he pretends to? for to counterfeit and dissemble, is to put on the appearance of some real excellency. Now, the best way in the world for a man to seem to be any thing, is really to be what he would seem to be. Besides that it is many times as troublesome to make good the pretence of a good quality, as to have it; and if a man have it not, it is ten to one but he is discovered to want it, and then all his pains and labour to seem to have it is lost. There is something unnatural in painting, which a skilful eye will easily discern from native beauty and complexion.

It is hard to personate and act a part long; for where truth is not at the bottom, nature will always be endeavouring to return, and will peep out and betray herself one time or other. Therefore, if any man think it con-

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venient to seem good, let him be so indeed, and then his goodness will appear to every body's satisfaction: for truth is convincing, and carries its own light and evidence along with it; and will not only commend us to every man's conscience, but, which is much more, to God, who searcheth and seeth our hearts. So that, upon all accounts, sincerity is true wisdom. Particularly as to the affairs of this world, integrity hath many advantages over all the fine and artificial ways of dissimulation and deceit; it is much the plainer and easier, much the safer and more secure way of dealing in the world; it hath less of trouble and difficulty, of intanglement and perplexity, of danger and hazard, in it; it is the shortest and nearest way to our end, carrying us thither in a straight line, and will hold out and last longest. The arts of deceit and cunning do continually grow weaker, and less effectual and serviceable to them that use them: whereas integrity gains strength by use; and the more and longer any man practiseth it, the greater service it does him, by confirming his reputation, and encouraging those with whom he hath to do, to repose the greater trust and confidence in him, which is an unspeakable advantage in the business and affairs of life.

But a dissembler must always be upon his guard, and watch himself carefully, that he do not contradict his own pretence; for he acts an unnatural part, and therefore must put a continual force and restraint upon himself. Truth always lies uppermost; and if a man do not carefully attend, he will be apt to bolt it out: whereas he that acts sincerely, hath the easiest task in the world; because he follows nature, and so is put to no trouble and care about his words and actions; he needs not invent any pretences beforehand, nor make excuses afterwards, for any thing he hath said or done.

But insincerity is very troublesome to manage; a man hath so many things to attend to, so many ends to bring together, as make his life a very perplexed and intricate thing. *Oportet mendacem esse memorem;* "A liar had "need of a good memory;" lest he contradict at one time what he said at another: but truth is always consistent with itself, and needs nothing to help it out; it is always near at hand, and sits upon our lips, and is ready

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ready to drop out before we are aware; whereas a lie is troubleſome, and ſets a man's invention upon the rack, and one trick needs a great many more to make it good. It is like building upon a falſe foundation, which continually ſtands in need of props to ſhore it up, and proves at laſt more chargeable, than to have raiſed a ſubſtantial building at firſt upon a true and ſolid foundation: for ſincerity is firm and ſubſtantial; and there is nothing hollow and unſound in it; and becauſe it is plain and open, fears no diſcovery, of which the crafty man is always in danger; and when he thinks he walks in the dark, all his pretences are ſo tranſparent, that he that runs may read them: he is the laſt man that finds himſelf to be found out; and whilſt he takes it for granted that he makes fools of others, he renders himſelf ridiculous.

Add to all this, that ſincerity is the moſt compendious wiſdom, and an excellent inſtrument for the ſpeedy diſpatch of buſineſs; it creates confidence in thoſe we have to deal with, ſaves the labour of many inquiries, and brings things to an iſſue in few words: it is like travelling in a plain beaten road, which commonly brings a man ſooner to his journey's end, than by-ways, in which men often loſe themſelves. In a word, whatſoever convenience may be thought to be in falſhood and diſſimulation, it is ſoon over: but the inconvenience of it is perpetual; becauſe it brings a man under an everlaſting jealouſy and ſuſpicion, ſo that he is not believed when he ſpeaks truth, nor truſted when perhaps he means honeſtly: when a man hath once forfeited the reputation of his integrity, he is ſet faſt, and nothing will then ſerve his turn, neither truth nor falſhood.

And I have often thought, that God hath in great wiſdom hid from men of falſe and diſhoneſt minds the wonderful advantages of truth and integrity to the proſperity even of our worldly affairs. Theſe men are ſo blinded by their coveteouſneſs and ambition, that they cannot look beyond a preſent advantage; nor forbear to ſeize upon it, though by ways never ſo indirect; they cannot ſee ſo far, as to the remote conſequences of a ſteddy integrity, and the vaſt benefit and advantages which it will bring a man at laſt. Were but this ſort of men wiſe and clear-ſighted enough to diſcern this, they would be ho-

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neſt out of very knavery; not out of any love to honeſty or virtue, but with a crafty deſign to promote and advance more effectually their own intereſts: and therefore the juſtice of the divine providence hath hid this trueſt point of wiſdom from their eyes, that bad men might not be upon equal terms with the juſt and upright, and ſerve their own wicked deſigns by honeſt and lawful means.

Indeed, if a man were only to deal in the world for a day, and ſhould never have occaſion to converſe more with mankind, never more need their good opinion, or good word, it were then no great matter (ſpeaking as to the concernments of the world) if a man ſpent his reputation all at once, and ventured it at one throw: but if he be to continue in the world, and would have the advantage of converſation whilſt he is in it, let him make uſe of truth and ſincerity in all his words and actions; for nothing but this will laſt and hold out to the end; all other arts will fail, but truth and integrity will carry a man through, and bear him out to the laſt.

It is the obſervation of Solomon, Prov. xii. 19. *The lip of truth ſhall be eſtabliſhed for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.* And the wiſer any man is, the more clearly will he diſcern how ſerviceable ſincerity is to all the great ends and purpoſes of human life; and that man hath made a good progreſs, and profited much in the ſchool of wiſdom, who valueth truth and ſincerity according to their worth. Every man will readily grant them to be great virtues, and arguments of a generous mind; but that there is ſo much of true wiſdom in them, and that they really ſerve to profit our intereſt in this world, ſeems a great paradox to the generality of men; and yet I doubt not but it is undoubtedly true, and generally found to be ſo in the experience of mankind.

6. Laſtly, Conſider that it is not worth our while to diſſemble, conſidering the ſhortneſs, and eſpecially the uncertainty of our lives. To what purpoſe ſhould we be ſo cunning, when our abode in this world is ſo ſhort and uncertain? Why ſhould any man, by diſſembling his judgment, or acting contrary to it, incur at once the diſpleaſure of God, and the diſcontent of his own mind? eſpecially if we conſider, that all our diſſimulation ſhall one

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one day be made manifeſt, and publiſhed on the open theatre of the world, before God, angels and men, to our everlaſting ſhame and confuſion; all diſguiſe and vizards ſhall then be plucked off, and every man ſhall appear in his true colours. For *then the ſecrets of men ſhall be judged;* and *God will bring every work into judgment, and every ſecret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Nothing is now covered, which ſhall not then be revealed; nor hid, which ſhall not then be known.*

Let us then be now what we would be glad to be found in that day, when all pretences ſhall be examined, and the cloſeſt hypocriſy of men ſhall be laid open, and daſhed out of countenance; when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſcloſed, and all the hidden works of darkneſs ſhall be revealed, and all our thoughts, words, and actions ſhall be brought to a ſtrict and ſevere trial, and be cenſured by that impartial and infallible judgment of God, which is according to truth; *in the day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt.*

To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be glory now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON LVI.

The excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience.

Preached at Whitehall, 1686, before the Princeſs Anne.

HEB. xi. 17. 18. 19.

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Iſaac: and he that had received the promiſes, offered up his only begotten ſon: of whom it was ſaid, That in Iſaac ſhall thy ſeed be called: accounting that God was able to raiſe him up, even from the dead; from whence alſo he received him in a figure.

THE deſign of this epiſtle to the Hebrews is, to recommend to them the Chriſtian religion, to which they were but newly converted; and to encourage

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encourage them to constancy in the profession of it, notwithstanding the sufferings which attended it. He sets before them in this chapter several examples in the Old Testament of those, who though they were under a much more imperfect dispensation, yet, by a stedfast belief in God and his promises, had performed such wonderful acts of obedience and self-denial.

He begins with the patriarchs before the flood; but insists chiefly upon the examples of two eminent persons of their own nation, as nearest to them, and most likely to prevail upon them, the examples of Abraham and Moses; the one the father of their nation, the other their great lawgiver; and both of them the greatest patterns of faith, and obedience, and self-denial, that the history of all former ages, from the beginning of the world, had afforded.

I shall at this time, by God's assistance, treat of the first of these, the example of Abraham; the constancy of whose faith, and the chearfulness of whose obedience, even in the difficultest cases, is so remarkable above all the other examples mentioned in this chapter. For, *at the command of God, he left his kindred and his country, not knowing whither he should go:* by which eminent act of obedience, he declared himself to be wholly at God's disposal, and ready to follow him. But this was no trial in comparison of that here in my text, when God commanded him *to offer up his only son:* but such was the immutable stedfastness of his faith, and the perfect submission of his obedience, that it does not appear that he made the least check at it; but, out of perfect reverence and obedience to the authority of the divine command, he went about it as readily and chearfully, as if God had bid him do some small thing: *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac.*

For the explication of which words, it will be requisite to consider two things.

1. The trial or temptation in general.

2. The excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience upon this trial.

First, The trial or temptation in general. It is said, that *Abraham, when he was tried*, the word is πειραζόμενος, *being tempted*; that is, God intending to make trial

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trial of his faith and obedience: and so it is expressed, Gen. xxii. 1. 2. where it is said, that *God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Take now thy son, thine only son.*

Now, there are two difficulties concerning this matter. It seems contrary to scripture, that God should tempt any man, and contrary to reason; because God, who knows what every man will do, needed not to make trial of any man's faith and obedience.

1. It seems contrary to scripture, which says, *God tempts no man.* And it is most true, that God tempts no man, with a design to draw him into sin; but this doth not hinder, but he may try their faith and obedience with great difficulties, to make them the more illustrious. Thus God tempted Abraham; and he permitted Job, and even our blessed Saviour himself, to be thus tempted.

2. It seems contrary to reason, that God, who knows what any man will do in any circumstances, should go to make trial of it. But God does not try men for his own information, but to give an illustrious proof and example to others of faith and obedience. And though, after this trial of Abraham, God says to him, *Now I know that thou loveſt me, because thou haſt not with-held thy son, thine only son from me;* yet we are to understand this as spoken after the manner of men; as God elsewhere speaks to Abraham concerning Sodom: *I will go down now to see whether they have done altogether according to the cry which is come up unto me; and if not, I will know.*

I proceed to the *Second* thing I proposed, the excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience upon this trial: *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac.* God accepts of it as if he had done it; because he had done it in part, and was ready to have performed the rest, if God had not countermanded him.

And this act of faith and obedience in Abraham will appear the more illustrious, if we consider these three things.

1. The firmness and stedfastness of his faith, notwithstanding the objections against it.

2. The

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2. The constancy of his resolution, notwithstanding the difficulty of the thing.

3. The reasonableness of his faith, in that he gave satisfaction to himself in so hard and perplexed a case.

I. The firmness and stedfastness of his faith will appear, if we consider what objections there were in the case, enough to shake a very strong faith. There were three great objections against this command, and such as might in reason make a wise and good man doubtful whether this command were from God.

The horrid nature of the thing commanded.

The grievous scandal that might seem almost unavoidably to follow upon it.

And the horrible consequence of it, which seemed to make the former promise of God to Abraham void.

1. The horrid nature of the thing commanded; which was, for a father to kill his own child. This must needs appear very barbarous and unnatural, and look liker a sacrifice to an idol, than to the true God.

It seemed to be against the law of nature, and directly contrary to that kindness and affection which God himself had planted in the hearts of parents towards their children.

And there is no affection more natural and strong than this; for there are many persons that would redeem the lives of their children with the hazard of their own. Now, that God hath planted such an affection in nature, is an argument that it is good; and therefore it could not but seem strange, that he should command any thing contrary to it. And, in this case, there were two circumstances that increased the horror of the fact, that his son was innocent, and that he was to slay him with his own hands.

1*st*, That his son was innocent. It would grieve the heart of any father, to give up his son to death, though he were never so undutiful and disobedient.

So passionately was David affected with the death of his son Absalom, as to wish he had died for him, though he died in the very act of rebellion, and though the saving of his life had been inconsistent with the peace of his government.

How deep then must it sink into the heart of a father, to

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to give up his innocent ſon to death? And ſuch a ſon was Iſaac, for any thing that appeared to the contrary, God himſelf gave him this teſtimony, that he was *the ſon whom his father loved;* and there is no intimation of any thing to the contrary. Now, this could not but appear ſtrange to a good man, that God ſhould command an innocent perſon to be put to death. But,

2*dly*, That a father ſhould be commanded, not only to give up his ſon to death, but to ſlay him with his own hands; not only to be a ſpectator, but to be the actor in this tragedy; what father would not ſhrink and ſtart back at ſuch a command? what good man, eſpecially in ſuch a caſe, and where nature was ſo hard preſſed, would not have been apt to have looked upon ſuch a revelation as this, rather as the ſuggeſtion and illuſion of an evil ſpirit, than a command of God? And yet Abraham's faith was not ſtaggered, ſo as to call this revelation of God in queſtion.

2. The grievous ſcandal that might ſeem almoſt unavoidably to follow upon it, was another great objection againſt it. The report of ſuch an action would in all appearance blemiſh the reputation, even of ſo good a man, amongſt all ſober and conſiderate perſons, who could hardly forbear to cenſure him, as a wicked and unnatural man.

And this was a hard caſe, for a man to be put to ſacrifice at once two of the deareſt things in the world, his reputation and his ſon: nor could he have eaſily defended himſelf from this imputation, by alledging an expreſs revelation and command of God for it; for who would give credit to it?

A revelation to another man is nothing to me, unleſs I be aſſured that he had ſuch a revelation; which I cannot be, but either by another immediate revelation, or by ſome miracle to confirm it.

The act had an appearance of ſo much horror, that it was not eaſily credible, that God ſhould command it; and, if every man's confident pretence to revelation be admitted, the worſt actions may plead this in their excuſe. So that this pretence would have been ſo far from excuſing his fault, that it muſt rather have been eſteemed

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eſteemed an high aggravation of it, by adding the boldeſt impiety to the moſt barbarous inhumanity.

But Abraham was not ſtumbled at this, nor at the advantage which the enemies of his religion would make of ſuch an occaſion, who would be ready to ſay, "Here "is your excellent good man, and likely to be a friend "of God, who was ſo cruel an enemy to his own ſon!" All this, it is probable, he might conſider: but it did not move him, being reſolved to obey God, and to leave it to his wiſdom to provide againſt all the inconveniences that might follow upon it.

3. The ſtrongeſt objection of all, was, the horrible conſequence of the thing, which ſeemed to claſh with former revelations, and to make void the promiſe which God had before made to Abraham, *That in his ſeed all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed;* which promiſe was expreſsly limited to Iſaac and his poſterity, who had then no ſon.

And of this difficulty the Apoſtle takes expreſs notice in the text, that *he that had received the promiſes*, (that is, was perſuaded of the truth and faithfulneſs of them), *offered up his only begotten ſon: of whom it was ſaid, That in Iſaac ſhall thy ſeed be called.*

And this objection is really ſo ſtrong, that if Abraham could not have given himſelf ſatisfaction about it, he might juſtly have queſtioned the truth of the revelation. For no man can poſſibly entertain two contradictory revelations as from God, but he muſt of neceſſity queſtion one or both of them: but ſo ſtrong was Abraham's faith, as not to be ſhaken by the ſeeming contradiction of theſe two revelations.

II. We will conſider the conſtancy of his reſolution to obey God, notwithſtanding the harſhneſs and difficulty of the thing. Though Abraham were firmly perſuaded, that this command to kill his ſon was really from God; yet it is no eaſy matter for a man to bring himſelf to obey God in ſo difficult a caſe; and, out of mere reverence to the divine authority, to diveſt himſelf of his nature, and to thwart the ſtrongeſt inclinations of it: a man would be very apt to confer with fleſh and blood in ſuch a caſe. Let but any man that knows what it is to be a father, lay his hand upon his heart, and conſider

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der his own bowels, and he will be aſtoniſhed at Abraham's obedience, as well as his faith.

To take *his ſon, his only ſon, his ſon whom he loved*, and in whom he placed all his hopes of a happy poſterity, and, with his own hands, to deſtroy him and all his hopes together! it muſt be a ſtrong faith, that will engage a man to obedience in ſo difficult an inſtance.

There is one circumſtance more eſpecially which renders Abraham's obedience very remarkable; the deliberateneſs of the action. It had not been ſo much, if ſo ſoon as he had received this command from God, he had upon a ſudden impulſe and tranſport of zeal done this.

But that his obedience might be the more glorious, and have all the circumſtances of advantage given to it, God would have it done deliberately, and upon full conſideration; and therefore he bade him go to the mountain, three days journey from the place where he was, and there to offer up his ſon.

It is in acts of virtue and obedience, as in acts of ſin and vice; the more deliberate the ſin is, and the more calm and ſedate temper the man is in when he commits it, the greater is the fault; whereas, what is done by ſurpriſe, in the heat of temptation, or tranſport of paſſion, hath ſome excuſe from the ſuddenneſs and undeliberateneſs of it.

So it is in acts of virtue and obedience, eſpecially if they be attended with conſiderable difficulty; the more deliberately they are done, the more virtuous they are, and the greater praiſe is due to them.

Now, that Abraham's obedience might want nothing to heighten it, God ſeems on purpoſe to have put ſo long a ſpace betwixt the command and the performance of it; he gives him time to cool upon it, to weigh the command, and to look on every ſide of this difficult duty; he gives ſcope for his reaſon to argue and debate the caſe, and opportunity for natural affection to play its part, and for fleſh and blood to raiſe all its batteries againſt the reſolution which he had taken up.

And now we may eaſily imagine, what conflict this good man had within himſelf, during thoſe three days that he was travelling to the mountain in Moriah; and how his heart was ready to be rent in pieces, betwixt

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his duty to God, and his affection to his child; ſo that every ſtep of this unwelcome and wearisome journey, he did, as it were, lay violent hands upon himſelf.

He was to offer up his ſon but once; but he ſacrificed himſelf, and his own will, every moment for three days together; and when he came thither, and all things were ready, the altar, the wood, and the fire, and the knife, it muſt needs be a ſtabbing queſtion, and wound him to the heart, which his innocent ſon ſo innocently aſked him, *Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?*

It muſt be a ſtrong faith indeed, and a mighty reſolution, that could make him to hold out three days againſt the violent aſſaults of his own nature, and the charming preſence of his ſon, enough to melt his heart, as often as he caſt his eyes upon him: and yet nothing of all this made him to ſtagger in his duty, but, *being ſtrong in faith, he gave glory to God*, by one of the moſt miraculous acts of obedience that ever was exacted from any of the ſons of men.

III. In the third and laſt place, I come to conſider the reaſonableneſs of his faith, in that he was able to give ſatisfaction to himſelf in ſo intricate and perplexed a caſe. The conſtancy of Abraham's faith was not an obſtinate and ſtubborn perſuaſion, but the reſult of the wiſeſt reaſoning and ſobereſt conſideration.

So the text ſays, that *he counted* (the word is λογισάμενος, *he reaſoned with himſelf*) *that God was able to raiſe him up from the dead*; ſo that he debated the matter with himſelf, and gave himſelf ſatisfaction concerning the objections and difficulties in the caſe; and being fully ſatisfied that it was a divine command, he reſolved to obey it.

As for the objections I have mentioned:

1. The horrid appearance of the thing, that a father ſhould ſlay his innocent ſon. Why ſhould Abraham ſcruple the doing this, at the command of God, who being the author of life, hath power over it, and may reſume what he hath given, and take away the life of any of his creatures when he will, and make whom he pleaſeth inſtruments in the execution of his command?

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It was indeed a hard case, considering natural affection; and therefore God did not permit it to be executed.

But the question of God's right over the lives of men, and of his authority to command any man to be the instrument of his pleasure in such a case, admits of no dispute.

And though God hath planted strong affections in parents towards their children; yet he hath written no law in any man's heart to the prejudice of his own sovereign right. This is a case always excepted, and this takes away the objection of injustice.

2. As to the scandal of it; that could be no great objection in those times, when the absolute power of parents over their children was in its full force, and they might put them to death without being accountable for it. So that then it was no such startling matter to hear of a father putting his child to death. Nay, in much later times we find, that in the most ancient laws of the Romans, (I mean those of the twelve tables), children are absolutely put in the power of their parents; to whom is given *jus vitæ & necis*, "a power of life "and death over them;" and likewise to sell them for slaves.

And though amongst the Jews this paternal power was limited by the law of Moses; and the judgment of life and death was taken out of the father's hands, except in case of contumacy and rebellion; (and even in that case the process was to be before the elders of the city): yet it is certain, that in elder times the paternal power was more absolute and unaccountable; which takes off much from the horror and scandal of the thing, as it appears now to us who have no such power.

And therefore we do not find in the history, that this objection did much stick with Abraham; it being then no unusual thing for a father to put his child to death upon a just account.

And the command of God, who hath absolute dominion over the lives of his creatures, is certainly a just reason; and no man can reasonably scruple the doing of that, upon the command of God, which he might have done by his own authority, without being accountable for the action to any but God only.

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3. As to the objection from the horrible consequence of the thing commanded, that the slaying of Isaac seemed to overthrow *the promise which God had made before to Abraham, That in Isaac his seed should be called*; this seems to him to be the great difficulty; and here he makes use of reason, to reconcile the seeming contradiction of this command of God to his former promise. So the text tells us, that *he offered up his only begotten son: of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: reasoning that God was able to raise him up from the dead.* So that, though Isaac were put to death, yet he saw how the promise of God might still be made good by his being raised from the dead, and living afterwards to have a numerous posterity.

There had then indeed been no instance or example of any such thing in the world, as the resurrection of one from the dead; which makes Abraham's faith the more wonderful. But he confirmed himself in this belief, by an example as near the case as might be: *He reasoned, that God was able to raise him from the dead; from whence also he had received him in a figure.*

This, I know, is by interpreters generally understood of Isaac's being delivered from the jaws of death, when he was laid upon the altar, and ready to be slain. But the text seems not to speak of what happened after; but of something that had passed before, by which Abraham confirmed himself in this persuasion, that if he were slain, God would raise him up again.

And so the words ὅθεν ἐκομίσατο ought to be rendered in the past time, *from whence also he had received him in a figure.* So that this expression plainly refers to the miraculous birth of Isaac, when his parents were past the age of having children; which was little less than a resurrection from the dead.

And so the scripture speaks of it, Rom. iv. 17. *Abraham believed God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things which are not, as if they were: and not being weak in faith, he considered not his own body which was dead.* And a little before the text, speaking of the miraculous birth of Isaac, *And therefore sprang there of one, and him as good as dead, as many as the stars of heaven.*

From whence (as the Apostle tells us) Abraham reasoned

ſoned thus: That God who gave him Iſaac at firſt in ſo miraculous a manner, was able by another miracle to reſtore him to life again after he was dead, and to make him the father of many nations: *He reaſoned, that God was able to raiſe him up from the dead; from whence alſo he had received him in a figure.*

Thus you ſee the reaſonableneſs of Abraham's faith. He pitched upon the main difficulty in the caſe, and he anſwered it as well as was poſſible. And, in his reaſoning about this matter, he gives the utmoſt weight to every thing that might tend to vindicate the truth and faithfulneſs of God's promiſe, and to make the revelations of God conſiſtent with one another: and this, though he had a great intereſt and a very tender concernment of his own to have biaſſed him.

For he might have argued with great appearance and probability the other way. But as every pious and good man ſhould do, he reaſoned on God's ſide, and favoured that part. Rather than diſobey a command of God, or believe that his promiſe ſhould be fruſtrate, he will believe any thing that is credible and poſſible, how improbable ſoever. Thus far faith will go; but no farther. From the believing of plain contradictions and impoſſibilities, it always deſires to be excuſed.

Thus much for explication of the words; which I hope hath not been altogether unprofitable; becauſe it tends to clear a point which hath ſomething of difficulty and obſcurity in it; and to vindicate the holy ſcripture, and the divine revelation therein contained, from one of the moſt ſpecious objections of infidelity.

But I had a farther deſign in this text; and that is, to make ſome obſervations and inferences from it that may be of uſe to us. As,

Firſt, That human nature is capable of clear and full ſatisfaction concerning a divine revelation. For if Abraham had not been fully and paſt all doubt aſſured, that this was a command from God, he would certainly have ſpared his ſon. And nothing is more reaſonable, than to believe, that thoſe to whom God is pleaſed to make immediate revelations of his will, are ſome way or other aſſured that they are divine; otherwiſe they would be in vain, and to no purpoſe.

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But how men are assured concerning divine revelations made to them, is not so easy to make out to others. Only these two things we are sure of.

1. That God can work in the mind of man a firm persuasion of the truth of what he reveals, and that such a revelation is from him. This no man can doubt of, that considers the great power and influence which God, who made us, and perfectly knows our frame, must needs have upon our minds and understandings.

2. That God never offers any thing to any man's belief that plainly contradicts the natural and essential notions of his mind; because this would be for God to destroy his own workmanship, and to impose that upon the understanding of man, which, whilst it remains what it is, it cannot possibly admit.

For instance, we cannot imagine, that God should reveal to any man any thing that plainly contradicts the essential perfections of the divine nature: for such a revelation can no more be supposed to be from God, than a revelation from God that there is no God; which is a downright contradiction.

Now, to apply this to the revelation which God made to Abraham concerning the sacrificing of his son; this was made to him by an audible voice, and he was fully satisfied by the evidence which it carried along with it, that it was from God.

For this was not the first of many revelations that had been made to him; so that he knew the manner of them, and had found, by manifold experience, that he was not deceived; and upon this experience was grown to a great confidence in the truth and goodness of God. And it is very probable, the first time God appeared to Abraham, because it was a new thing, that, to make way for the credit of future revelations, God did shew himself to him in so glorious a manner as was abundantly to his conviction.

And this St. Stephen does seem to intimate, Acts vii. 2. *The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia.* Now, by this glorious appearance of God to him at first, he was so prepared for the entertainment of after revelations, that he was not staggered even at this, concerning the sacrificing of his son;

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son; being, both by the manner of it, and the assurance that accompanied it, fully satisfied that it was from God.

Secondly, I observe from hence the great and necessary use of reason in matters of faith. For we see here, that Abraham's reason was a mighty strengthening and help to his faith. Here were two revelations made to Abraham, which seemed to clash with one another; and if Abraham's reason could not have reconciled the repugnancy of them, he could not possibly have believed them both to be from God; because this natural notion or principle, That God cannot contradict himself, every man does first, and more firmly believe, than any revelation whatsoever.

Now, Abraham's reason relieved him in this strait. So the text expressly tells us: *He reasoned with himself, that God was able to raise him from the dead.*

And this being admitted, the command of God concerning the slaying of Isaac, was very well consistent with his former promise, *That in Isaac his seed should be called.*

I know there hath a very rude clamour been raised by some persons, (but of more zeal, I think, than judgment), against the use of reason in matters of faith. But how very unreasonable this is, will appear to any one that will but have patience to consider these following particulars.

1. The nature of divine revelation; that it doth not endue men with new faculties, but propoundeth new objects to the faculties which they had before. Reason is the faculty whereby revelation is to be discerned; for when God reveals any thing to us, he reveals it to our understanding, and by that we are to judge of it. Therefore St. John cautions us, 1 John iv. 1. *not to believe every spirit; but to try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world*; that is, there are many that falsely pretend to inspiration: but how can these pretenders be tried, and discerned from those that are truly inspired, but by using our reason in comparing the evidence for the one and the other?

2. This will farther appear, if we consider the nature of

of faith. Faith (as we are now speaking of it) is an assent of the mind to something as revealed by God. Now, all assent must be grounded upon evidence; that is, no man can believe any thing, unless he have, or thinks he hath some reason to do so. For to be confident of a thing without reason, is not faith; but a presumptuous persuasion, and obstinacy of mind.

3. This will yet be more evident, if we consider the method that must of necessity be used to convince any man of the truth of religion. Suppose we had to deal with one that is a stranger and enemy to Christianity, what means are proper to be used to gain him over to it? The most natural method surely were this, to acquaint him with the holy scriptures, which are the rule of our faith and practice. He would ask us, "Why we believe "that book?" The proper answer would be, "Because it is the word of God." This he could not but acknowledge to be a very good reason, if it were true. But then he would ask, "Why we believed it to be the "word of God, rather than Mahomet's Alcoran, which "pretends no less to be of divine inspiration?"

If any man now should answer, "That he could give "no reason, why he believed it to be the word of God; "only he believed it to be so, and so every man else "ought to do, without inquiring after any farther rea-"son; because reason is to be laid aside in matters of "faith:" would not the man presently reply, "That "he had just as much reason as this comes to, to be-"lieve the Alcoran, or any thing else;" that is, none at all?

But certainly the better way would be, to satisfy this man's reason, by proper arguments, that the scriptures are a divine revelation; and that no other book in the world can with equal reason pretend to be so. And if this be a good way, then we do and must call in the assistance of reason for the proof of our religion.

4. Let it be considered farther, that the highest commendations that are given in scripture to any one's faith, are given upon account of the reasonableness of it. Abraham's faith is famous, and made a pattern to all generations, because he reasoned himself into it, notwithstanding the objections to the contrary: and he did not

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blindly break through these objections, and wink hard at them; but he looked them in the face, and gave himself reasonable satisfaction concerning them.

The Centurion's faith is commended by our Saviour, Matth. viii. 9. because, when his servant was sick, he did not desire him to come to his house, but to *speak the word only, and his servant should be healed:* for he reasoned thus: *I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doth it.* Now, if he that was himself under authority, could thus command those that were under him; much more could he that had a divine power and commission, do what he pleased by his word. And our Saviour is so far from reprehending him, for reasoning himself into this belief, that he admires his faith so much the more for the reasonableness of it, ℣ 10. *When Jesus heard this, he marvelled, and said to them that followed him, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.*

In like manner, our Saviour commends the woman of Canaan's faith; because she inforced it so reasonably, Matth. xv. 22. She sued him to help her daughter; *but he answered her not a word:* and when his disciples could not prevail with him to mind her, yet still she pressed him, *saying, Lord, help me;* and when he repulsed her with this severe answer, *It is not meet to take the childrens bread, and cast it to dogs,* she made this quick and modest reply, *Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.* She acknowledgeth her own unworthiness; but yet believes his goodness to be such, that he will not utterly reject those who humbly seek to him: upon which he gives her this testimony, *O woman, great is thy faith!*

The Apostles were divinely inspired; and yet the Bereans are commended, because they inquired and satisfied themselves in the reasons of their belief, before they assented to the doctrine which was delivered to them, even by teachers that certainly were infallible.

5. None are reproved in scripture for their unbelief, but where sufficient reason and evidence was offered to them.

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them. The Israelites were generally blamed for their infidelity, but then it was after such mighty wonders had been wrought for their conviction.

The Jews in our Saviour's time are not condemned simply for their unbelief, but for not believing when there was such clear evidence offered to them. So our Saviour himself says: *If I had not done amongst them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin.*

Thomas indeed is blamed for the perverseness of his unbelief, because he would believe nothing but what he himself saw.

6. Lastly, To shew this yet more plainly, let us consider the great inconvenience and absurdity of declining the use of reason in matters of religion. There can be no greater prejudice to religion, than to decline this trial.

To say, we have no reason for our religion, is to say, it is unreasonable. Indeed it is reason enough for any article of our faith, that God hath revealed it; because this is one of the strongest and most cogent reasons for the belief of any thing. But when we say, God hath revealed any thing, we must be ready to prove it, or else we say nothing. If we turn off reason here, we level the best religion in the world with the wildest and most absurd enthusiasms.

And it does not alter the case much, to give reason ill names, to call it *blind*, and *carnal reason*. Our best reason is but very short and imperfect: but, since it is no better, we must make use of it as it is, and make the best of it.

Before I pass from this argument, I cannot but observe, that both the extremes of those who differ from our church are generally great declaimers against the use of reason in matters of faith. If they find their account in it, it is well. For our parts, we apprehend no manner of inconvenience in having reason on our side; nor need we to desire a better evidence, that any man is in the wrong, than to hear him declare against reason, and thereby to acknowledge that reason is against him. Men may vilify reason as much as they please; and though *being reviled she reviles not again*, yet, in a more still and gentle way, she commonly hath her full revenge upon all those that rail at her.

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I have often wondered, that people can with patience endure to hear their teachers and guides talk againſt reaſon; and not only ſo, but they pay them the greater ſubmiſſion and veneration for it. One would think this but an odd way to gain authority over the minds of men: but ſome ſkilful and deſigning men have found by experience, that it is a very good way to recommend them to the ignorant; as nurſes uſe to endear themſelves to children, by perpetual noiſe and nonſenſe.

Thirdly, I obſerve, that God obligeth no man to believe plain and evident contradictions as matters of faith. Abraham could not reaſonably have believed this ſecond revelation to have been from God, if he had not found ſome way to reconcile it with the firſt. For though a man were never ſo much diſpoſed to ſubmit his reaſon to divine revelation; yet it is not poſſible for any man to believe God againſt God himſelf.

Some men ſeem to think, that they oblige God mightily by believing plain contradictions. But the matter is quite otherwiſe. He that made man a reaſonable creature, cannot take it kindly from any man to debaſe his workmanſhip, by making himſelf unreaſonable. And therefore, as no ſervice or obedience, ſo no faith is acceptable unto God, but what is reaſonable. If it be not ſo, it may be confidence or preſumption; but it is not faith. For he that can believe plain contradictions, may believe any thing, how abſurd ſoever; becauſe nothing can be more abſurd than the belief of a plain contradiction: and he that can believe any thing, believes nothing upon good grounds, becauſe to him truth and falſhood are all one.

Fourthly, I obſerve, that the great cauſe of the defect of mens obedience is the weakneſs of their faith. Did we believe the commands of God in the goſpel, and his promiſes and threatenings, as firmly as Abraham believed God in this caſe, what ſhould we not be ready to do or ſuffer in obedience to him?

If our faith were but as ſtrong and vigorous as his was, the effects of it would be as great and conſpicuous. Were we verily perſuaded, that all the precepts of our religion are the expreſs laws of God, and that all the promiſes and threatenings of the goſpel will one day be verified

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verified and made good, *what manner of persons should we be in all holy conversation and godliness?* How would the lively thoughts of another world raise us above the vanities of this present life, and set us out of the reach of the most powerful temptations that this world can assault us withal, and make us to do all things with regard to eternity, and to that solemn and dreadful account which we must one day make to God the judge of all?

It is nothing but the want of a firm and steady belief of these things that makes our devotion so dead and heartless, and our resolutions of doing better so weak and inconstant. This it is that makes us so easy a prey to every temptation, and the things of this world to look so much bigger than they are; the enjoyments of it more tempting, and the evils of it more terrible than in truth they are: and, in all disputes betwixt our conscience and our interest, this makes us hold the balance so unequally, and to put our foot upon the lighter scale, that it may seem to weigh down the other.

In a word, in proportion to the strength or weakness of our faith, our obedience to God will be more or less constant, uniform, and perfect; because faith is the great source and spring of all the virtues of a good life.

Fifthly, We have great reason to submit to the ordinary strokes of God's providence upon ourselves, or near relations, or any thing that is dear to us. Most of these are easy, compared with Abraham's case. It requires a prodigious strength of faith to perform so miraculous an act of obedience.

Sixthly, and lastly, We are utterly inexcusable, if we disobey the easy precepts of the gospel. *The yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light*, in comparison of God's former dispensations. This was *a grievous commandment* which God gave to Abraham, *to sacrifice his only son*. It was *a hard saying indeed*; and *which of us could have been able to bear it?*

But, if God think fit to call us to the more difficult duties of self-denial, and suffering for his truth and righteousness sake, we must, after the example of faithful Abraham, not think much to deny or part with any thing

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thing for him, no not life itſelf. But even this, which is the hardeſt part of religion, is eaſier than what God put upon Abraham.

For it doth not offer near the violence to nature, to lay down our life in a good cauſe, as it would do to put a child to death with our own hands: beſides the conſideration of the extraordinary comfort and ſupport, and the glorious rewards that are expreſsly promiſed to our obedience and ſelf-denial in ſuch a caſe; encouragement enough to make a very difficult duty eaſy.

And whilſt I am perſuading you and myſelf to reſolution and conſtancy in our holy religion, notwithſtanding all hazards and hardſhips that may attend it, I have a juſt ſenſe of the frailty of human nature, and of human reſolution; but withal, a moſt firm perſuaſion of the goodneſs of God, that *he will not ſuffer* thoſe who ſincerely love him and his truth, *to be tempted above what they are able.*

I will add but one conſideration more, to ſhew the difference betwixt Abraham's caſe and ours. God commanded him to do the hardeſt thing in the world, to ſacrifice his only ſon; but he hath given us an eaſy commandment. And, that he might effectually oblige us to our duty, he hath done that for us which he required Abraham to do for him: *He hath not ſpared his own Son, his only ſon; but hath given him up to death for us all. And hereby we know that he loveth us, that he hath given his Son for us.*

What God required of Abraham, he did not intend ſhould be executed; but one great deſign of it was, to be a type and figure of that immenſe love and kindneſs which he intended to all mankind in the ſacrifice of his Son, as a propitiation for the ſins of the whole world.

And as the moſt clear and expreſs promiſe of the Meſſias was made to Abraham, ſo the moſt expreſs and lively type of the Meſſias that we meet with in all the Old Teſtament, was Abraham's offering up his ſon. And, as St. Hierom tells us, from an ancient and conſtant tradition of the Jews, the mountain in Moriah, where Abraham was commanded to ſacrifice Iſaac, was mount Calvary, where our Lord alſo was crucified and offered up, that *by this one ſacrifice of himſelf once offer-*

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ed, he might perfect for ever them that are ſanctified, and obtain eternal redemption for us.

Now, *to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was ſlain; to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the firſt begotten from the dead; to the prince of the kings of the earth; to him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood:* to him be glory, and honour, thankſgiving and power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON LVII.

Moſes's choice of afflicted piety, rather than a kingdom.

Preached at Whitehall, 1687, before the Princeſs Anne.

HEB. xi. 24. 25.

By faith Moſes when he was come to years, refuſed to be called the ſon of Pharaoh's daughter; chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon.

THE text ſets before us a great pattern of ſelf-denial. For our better underſtanding whereof, I will give a brief account of the hiſtory of Moſes, to which our Apoſtle in this paſſage doth refer.

When Moſes was born, his parents, for fear of the cruel law which Pharaoh had made, *that all the male children of the Hebrews, ſo ſoon as they were born, ſhould be put to death,* after they had hid him three months, did at laſt expoſe him in an ark of bulruſhes upon the river Nile; and committed him to the providence of God, whom they deſpaired to conceal any longer by their own care.

Pharaoh's daughter, coming by the river-ſide, eſpied him, and had compaſſion on him; and gueſſing him to be one of the Hebrew children, called for an Hebrew nurſe,

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nurſe, to take care of him; who, as the providence of God had ordered it, proved to be the child's own mother. As he grew up, Pharaoh's daughter took care of his education in all princely qualities, and adopted him for her ſon; and Pharaoh, as Joſephus tells us, being without ſon, deſigned him heir of his kingdom.

Moſes refuſed this great offer. But why did he refuſe it, when it ſeemed to be preſented to him by the providence of God, and was brought about in ſo ſtrange a manner; and when by this means he might probably have had it in his power to have eaſed the Iſraelites of their cruel bondage, and perhaps have had the opportunity of reducing that great kingdom from the worſhip of idols to the true God? Why would he refuſe a kingdom which was offered to him with ſo fair an opportunity of doing ſo much good?

That which ſeems to have prevailed with Moſes, was this, that he could not accept the offer without forſaking God, and renouncing his religion: for conſidering how ſtrangely the Egyptians were addicted to idolatry, he could never hope to be accepted for heir of that kingdom, unleſs he would violate his conſcience, either by abandoning or diſſembling his religion.

And how unlikely it was, that he ſhould prevail with them to change their religion, he might eaſily judge by the example of Joſeph; who, though he had ſo much authority and eſteem amongſt them, by having been ſo great a benefactor to their nation; yet he could never move them in the leaſt in that matter.

Now, ſeeing he had no hopes of attaining or enjoying that dignity, without ſinning grievouſly againſt God, he would not purchaſe a kingdom at ſo unconſcionable a price. And as for the deliverance of his people, he was content to truſt the providence and promiſe of God for that; and in the mean time was reſolved rather to take a part in the afflictions of God's people, *than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon.*

From the words thus explained, I ſhall take occaſion to conſider theſe four things.

1. Moſes's ſelf-denial, in preferring and chuſing a ſtate of afflicted piety, before any ſinful enjoyments whatſoever, before the greateſt earthly happineſs and proſperi-

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ty, when it was not to be attained and enjoyed upon other terms than of ſinning againſt God.

2. I ſhall conſider thoſe circumſtances of this ſelf-denial of Moſes, which do very much commend and ſet off the virtue of it.

3. The prudence and reaſonableneſs of this choice, in preferring a ſtate of afflicted piety and virtue, before the greateſt proſperity and pleaſure of a ſinful courſe.

4. Suppoſing this choice to be reaſonable, I ſhall inquire how it comes to paſs, that ſo many make another choice.

I. We will conſider Moſes's ſelf-denial, in preferring a ſtate of afflicted piety before the greateſt earthly happineſs and proſperity, when it is not to be enjoyed upon other terms than of ſinning againſt God. He was adopted heir of the kingdom of Egypt, one of the greateſt and moſt flouriſhing kingdoms then in the world; but he could not hope to attain to this dignity, and to ſecure himſelf in the poſſeſſion of it, upon other terms than of complying with that nation in their idolatrous religion and worſhip.

Now, being brought up in the belief of the true God, the God of Iſrael, by his mother, to whom Pharaoh's daughter had committed him, he could not, without great violence to his conſcience, and the principles of his education, renounce the true God, and fall off to the idolatry of the Egyptians: and for this reaſon he *refuſed to be called the ſon of Pharaoh's daughter; chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction* with the worſhippers of the true God, than to have the temporary enjoyment of any thing that was not to be had without ſin; for ſo the word ought to be rendered, ἢ πρόσκαιρον ἔχειν ἁμαρτίας ἀπόλαυσιν, *than to have the temporary enjoyment of ſin.* So here was Moſes's ſelf-denial, that he choſe rather to ſuffer affliction with the worſhippers of the true God, than to gain a kingdom by the renouncing of God and religion.

II. We will conſider thoſe circumſtances of his ſelf-denial, which do very much commend and ſet off the virtue of it.

1. What it was he refuſed to be called; *the ſon of Pharaoh's daughter;* that is, to be heir of one of the greateſt and moſt flouriſhing kingdoms in the world: A temptation

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tion so great, that the devil himself could not find out one much greater, when he set upon the Son of God, to tempt him to fall down and worship him.

And when we consider for what inconsiderable things some men sell their religion and their consciences, we shall think it no small temptation which Moses here resisted. *Si violandum est jus, regnandi causâ violandum est:* "If a man would do any unjust thing, and violate "his religion and conscience, he would not do it for "less than a kingdom;" and it would be a very hard bargain even upon those terms.

2. Consider not only what he refused, but what he chose in the place of it; a state of great affliction and suffering. Had he refused a kingdom, and chosen the quiet condition of a subject of middle rank, beneath envy, and above contempt, his self-denial had not been so great: nay, perhaps he had made a wise choice, in the account of the wisest men, in preferring a plentiful and quiet retirement, before the cares of a crown, and the burden of publick government.

But it is very rare to find a man that would chuse rather to be oppressed and persecuted, than to be a prince, and to have the sweet power to use others as he pleased.

3. Consider how fair a prospect he had of enjoying this kingdom, if he could but have come up to the terms of it. He did not reject it, because he despaired of attaining it: for he had all the right that a good title could give him, being adopted heir to it; and yet he refused it.

To which I may add, that his breeding was such as might easily kindle ambitious thoughts in him. He was brought up in Pharaoh's court, and was the darling and favourite of it; exceeding beautiful, as Josephus tells us, and *learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians:* than which no two qualities are more apt to puff up and swell a man with big thoughts of himself.

They that are bred in a low condition, never think of a kingdom; men not being apt to aspire to things which are remote, and at a great distance from them.

But nothing is more rare in persons of great and generous minds, than such a self-denial as this.

4. Let it be considered, in the last place, that this was a deliberate choice; not any rash and sudden determinati-

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on made by him when he was of incompetent age to make a true judgment of things. And this the Apoſtle takes notice of in the text, as a very memorable circumſtance, that *when he was come to years, he refuſed to be called the ſon of Pharaoh's daughter.* And St. Stephen tells us, that he was full forty years old when he made this choice, Acts vii. 23. *When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to viſit his brethren the children of Iſrael.* When he was of ripeſt judgment, and in the height of his proſperity and reputation, he made this choice: for it is ſaid in the verſe before, that *Moſes was learned in all the wiſdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in word and deed;* that is, he was in great reputation for his wiſdom and valour.

This ſeems to refer to other paſſages of his life, which are not recorded in the ſcripture-hiſtory, but related at large by Joſephus, out of hiſtorians extant in his time. For he tells us, that when the Ethiopians had invaded Egypt, and almoſt over-run it, Pharaoh was directed by the oracle at Memphis, to make Moſes his General; who, by his extraordinary conduct and courage, overthrew the Ethiopians, and drave them out of Egypt.

This Moſes did not think fit to relate of himſelf: but St. Stephen ſeems to allude to it, when he ſays, that *he was mighty in word and deed.* And then it follows, *And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to viſit his brethren the children of Iſrael;* that is, when he was at full maturity of judgment, and in the height of his proſperity and reputation, he quitted the court of Egypt, and went to viſit his afflicted brethren, and choſe rather to take part with them in their ſufferings, than to accept thoſe great offers that were made to him.

There is likewiſe another paſſage in Joſephus concerning Moſes, which ſeems to be a forerunner of the contempt which he ſhewed afterwards of the crown of Egypt: That when Moſes was about three years old, Thermuſis, the daughter of Pharaoh, brought the child to him, who took him in his arms, and put his diadem upon his head; but Moſes took it off, and caſt it to the ground, and trampled it under his feet. This was but a childiſh act; and they who ſaw it, would eaſily believe, that, for all his childiſh contempt of it then, if it were

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put upon his head in good earneſt, when he came to be a man, he would hold it on faſter, and uſe it with more reſpect.

And it is not improbable, but that the Apoſtle might have ſome regard to this, when he ſays, that *Moſes when he came to years;* intimating, that he did not only trample upon the diadem of Pharaoh, when he was a child; but when he was come to years, and was capable of judging better of thoſe things, *he refuſed to be called the ſon of Pharaoh's daughter.*

But, before I proceed any farther, I cannot but take notice of an objection, which may ſeem to reflect greatly upon the integrity of Moſes. Can we think him ſo very conſcientious a man, who perſuaded the people of Iſrael, and pretended God's direction in the caſe, to cheat the Egyptians of their jewels, under a fraudulent pretence of borrowing them? There is ſome difficulty in the thing, as at firſt ſight it appears: and yet I doubt not, with your favourable attention, and free from prejudice, to vindicate Moſes clearly in this matter.

And I ſhall not inſiſt upon that which is commonly and truly ſaid in this caſe, that God, who is the ſupreme lord of all things, may transfer the rights of men from one to another: becauſe the objection doth not lie againſt God's right to take away from any man what he hath given him; but againſt the fraudulent manner of doing it, which ſeems unworthy of God to command or encourage.

Now, this matter, I think, is capable of another and much clearer anſwer; which, in ſhort, is this, and grounded upon the hiſtory, as we find it related, Exod. xii. The providence of God did, it ſeems, deſign by this way, to make ſome reparation to the Iſraelites, for the tyrannical uſage which they had received from the Egyptians; and that firſt (as the text expreſsly tells us) *in giving them favour with the Egyptians;* who, in truth, for their own ends, and to get rid of ſuch troubleſome gueſts, were diſpoſed to lend them any thing they had.

Thus far all is right; here is nothing but fair borrowing and lending: and if the Iſraelites acquired a right to thoſe things afterwards, there was then no obligation to reſtitution.

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Let us ſee then how the providence of God brought this about; namely, by permitting the Egyptians afterwards, without cauſe, and after leave given them to depart, to purſue them, with a deſign to have deſtroyed them: by which hoſtility and perfidiouſneſs, they plainly forfeited their right to what they had only lent before. For this hoſtile attempt, which would have warranted the Iſraelites to have ſpoiled them of their jewels, if they had been in the poſſeſſion of the Egyptians, did certainly warrant them to keep them when they had them: and by this means they became rightful poſſeſſors of what they had only by loan before; and could not have detained without fraud and injuſtice, if this hoſtility of the Egyptians had not given them a new title and clear right to them.

III. But I proceed to the third thing I propoſed; which was, to vindicate the prudence and reaſonableneſs of this choice. And, in ſpeaking to this, I ſhall abſtract from the particular caſe of Moſes, and ſhew in general, that it is a prudent and reaſonable thing, to prefer even an afflicted ſtate of piety and virtue, before the greateſt pleaſures and proſperity of a ſinful courſe. And this will appear, if we conſider theſe two things.

1. The ſufferings of good men upon account of religion, together with the reward of them.

2. The temporary enjoyment of ſin, with the miſchiefs and inconveniences conſequent upon them.

1. The ſufferings of good men upon the account of religion, together with the reward of them. This Moſes had in his eye, when he made this choice: for therefore *he choſe to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a ſeaſon;* becauſe *he had reſpect to the recompence of reward.* And though he had but a very imperfect diſcovery, in compariſon, of the future ſtate; yet, it ſeems, he had ſo much aſſurance of the goodneſs of God, as firmly to believe, that he ſhould be no loſer at the laſt, by any thing that he ſuffered for God and religion.

Indeed, if there were no life after this, and we had no expectation beyond this world, the wiſeſt thing we could do, would be to enjoy as much of the preſent contentment of this world, as we could make ourſelves maſters

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ſters of. But if we be deſigned for immortality, and ſhall be unſpeakably happy or intolerably miſerable in another world, according as we have demeaned ourſelves in this life; then certainly it is reaſonable, that we ſhould take the greateſt care of the longeſt duration, and be content to diſpenſe with ſome preſent inconveniences for an eternal felicity; and be willing to labour and take pains for a little while, that we may be happy for ever. And this is accounted prudence in the account of the wiſeſt men, to part with a little at preſent, for a far greater future advantage.

But the diſproportion betwixt time and eternity is ſo vaſt, that, did we but firmly believe, that we ſhall live for ever, nothing in this world could reaſonably be thought too good to part withal, or too grievous to ſuffer, for the obtaining of a bleſſed immortality. And upon this belief and perſuaſion of a mighty reward, beyond all their preſent ſufferings, and that they ſhould be infinite gainers at the laſt, the primitive Chriſtians were kept from ſinking under their preſent ſufferings, and fortified againſt all that the malice and cruelty of the world could do unto them. And if we would conſider all things together, and mind the inviſible things of another world, as well as the things which are ſeen, we ſhould eaſily diſcern, that he who ſuffers for God and religion, does not renounce his happineſs, but put it out to intereſt, upon terms of greateſt advantage, and does wiſely conſider his own beſt and moſt laſting intereſt. This is the firſt.

2. This will yet more evidently appear, if we conſider the temporary enjoyments of ſin, together with the miſchiefs and inconveniences attending and conſequent upon them; that as to the nature of them, they are mixed and imperfect; as to the duration of them, they are ſhort, and but for a ſeaſon; and as to the final iſſue and conſequence of them, that they end in miſery and ſorrow.

1ſt, As to the nature of them, all the pleaſures and enjoyments of ſin are mixed and imperfect. A wicked man may make a ſhew of mirth and pleaſure; *but even in laughter his heart is ſorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heavineſs.* There can be no true and ſincere pleaſure in any ſinful and vitious courſe, though it be attended with all

all the pomp and ſplendor of outward happineſs and proſperity: for where-ever ſin and vice is, there muſt be guilt; and where-ever guilt is, the mind will be reſtleſs and unquiet.

For there are two very troubleſome and tormenting paſſions, which are naturally conſequent upon guilt; ſhame, and fear: ſhame, ariſing from the apprehenſion of the danger of being diſcovered; and fear, from the apprehenſion of the danger of being puniſhed: and theſe do continually haunt the ſinner, and fill him with inward horror and confuſion in his moſt ſecret retirements. And if ſin were attended with no other trouble but the guilt of it, a wiſe man would not commit it, if it were for no other reaſon, but merely for the peace and quiet of his own mind.

2*dly*, The enjoyments of ſin, as to the duration of them, are but ſhort. Upon this conſideration, Moſes ſet no price and value upon them, but preferred affliction and ſuffering in good company, and in a good cauſe, before *the temporary enjoyments of ſin.*

If the enjoyments of this world were perfect in their nature, and had no mixture of trouble and ſorrow in them; yet this would be a great abatement of them, that they are of ſo ſhort and uncertain a continuance. The pleaſure of moſt ſins expires with the act of them; and when that is done, the delight vaniſheth.

I cannot deny but that there are ſeveral worldly advantages to be purchaſed by ſin, which may perhaps be of a longer continuance; as riches and honours, the common purchaſe of covetouſneſs and ambition, and of that long train of inferior vices which attend upon them, and miniſter unto them: but even thoſe enjoyments are, in their own nature, of an uncertain continuance, and much more uncertain, for being purchaſed by indirect and ill means. But if the enjoyment of theſe things were ſure to be of the ſame date with our lives, yet how ſhort a duration is that compared with eternity? Make the utmoſt allowance to theſe things that can be, yet we can but enjoy them whilſt we are in this world. When we come into the world of ſpirits, it will ſignify nothing to us to have been rich or great in this world. When we ſhall ſtand before that higheſt tribunal, it will not avail us in the

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the leaſt to have been princes, and great men, and judges on the earth; the pooreſt man that ever lived in this world, will then be upon equal terms with the biggeſt of us all.

For all mankind ſhall then ſtand upon a level; and thoſe civil diſtinctions of rich and poor, of baſe and honourable, which ſeem now ſo conſiderable, and make ſuch a glaring difference amongſt men in this world, ſhall all then be laid aſide, and moral differences ſhall only take place. All the diſtinctions which will then be made, will be betwixt the good and the bad, the righteous and the wicked; and the difference betwixt a good and bad man will be really much greater, than ever it ſeemed to be betwixt the higheſt and meaneſt perſons in this world.

And if this be ſo, why ſhould we value the enjoyments of ſin at ſo high a rate, which, at the beſt, are only conſiderable (and that only in the imagination of vain men) during our abode in this world; but bear no price at all in that country where we muſt live for ever: or if they did, we cannot carry them along with us. The guilt of them indeed will follow us with a vengeance; the injuſtice, and all the ill arts we have uſed for the getting or keeping of them, eſpecially if at once we have *made ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience.*

If we have changed our religion, or, which is much worſe, if continuing in the profeſſion of it, we have betrayed it, and the intereſt of it, for the gaining or ſecuring of any of theſe things; we ſhall find, to our ſorrow, that though *the enjoyments of ſin* were *but for a ſeaſon,* the guilt of it will never leave us nor forſake us, but will ſtick cloſe to us, and make us miſerable for ever. But this belongs to the

Third thing I propoſed to ſpeak to, namely, the final iſſue and conſequence of a ſinful courſe; which is, miſery and ſorrow, many times in this world, but moſt certainly in the next.

1. In this world, the very beſt iſſue and conſequence of a ſinful courſe that we can imagine, is repentance: and even this hath a great deal of ſenſible pain and trouble in it; for it is many times (eſpecially after great ſins, and a long continuance in them) accompanied with much

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regret and horror, with deep and piercing ſorrow, with diſmal and deſpairing thoughts of God's mercy, and with fearful apprehenſions of his wrath and vengeance: ſo that, if this were the worſt conſequence of ſin, (which indeed is the beſt), no man that conſiders and calculates things wiſely, would purchaſe the pleaſure of any ſin, at the price of ſo much anguiſh and ſorrow as a true and deep repentance will coſt him; eſpecially, ſince a true repentance does, in many caſes, oblige men to the reſtitution of that which hath been gained by ſin, if it hath been got by the injury of another.

And this conſideration quite takes away the pleaſure and profit of an ill-gotten eſtate. Better never to have had it, than to be obliged to refund it. A wiſe man will forbear the moſt pleaſant meats, if he know beforehand that they will make him deadly ſick, and that he ſhall never be at eaſe till he have brought them up again.

No man that believes the threatenings of God, and the judgments of another world, would ever ſin, but that he hopes to retrieve all again by repentance. But it is the greateſt folly in the world to commit any ſin upon this hope: for that is to pleaſe one's ſelf for the preſent, in hopes to have more trouble afterwards than the pleaſure comes to. But, eſpecially, no man would be guilty of an act of injuſtice and oppreſſion, in hopes to repent of it afterwards; becauſe there can be no repentance for ſuch ſins without reſtitution: and it is perfect madneſs for a man to run the hazard of his ſoul to get an eſtate, in hopes of reſtoring it again; for ſo he muſt do that truly repents of ſuch a ſin. But,

2. In the other world, the final iſſue and conſequence of all the pleaſures of ſin unrepented of, will certainly be miſery and ſorrow. How quietly ſoever a ſinner may paſs through this world, or out of it, miſery will certainly overtake him in the next; unſpeakable and eternal miſery, ariſing from an apprehenſion of the greateſt loſs, and a ſenſe of the ſharpeſt pain; and thoſe ſadly aggravated by the remembrance of paſt pleaſure, and the deſpair of future eaſe.

From a ſad apprehenſion and melancholy reflexion upon his ineſtimable loſs. In the other world, the ſinner ſhall be eternally ſeparated from God, who is the fountain

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tain of happineſs. This is the firſt part of that miſerable ſentence which ſhall be paſſed upon the wicked, *Depart from me.*

Sinners are not now ſenſible of the joys of heaven, and the happineſs of that ſtate; and therefore are not capable of eſtimating the greatneſs of ſuch a loſs: but this ſtupidity and inſenſibleneſs of ſinners continues only during this preſent ſtate, which affords men variety of objects and pleaſures to divert and entertain them. But when they are once entered upon the other world, they will then have nothing elſe to take up their thoughts, but the ſad condition into which, by their own wilful negligence and folly, they have plunged themſelves. They ſhall then *lift up their eyes*, and, with the rich man in the parable, at once ſee the happineſs of others, and feel their own miſery and torment.

But this is not all. Beſides the apprehenſion of ſo great a loſs, they ſhall be ſenſible of the ſoreſt and ſharpeſt pains: and how grievous thoſe ſhall be, we may conjecture by what the ſcripture ſays of them in general, that they are the effects of a mighty diſpleaſure, of anger and omnipotence met together, far greater than can be deſcribed by any pains and ſufferings which we are acquainted withal in this world: for *who knows the power of God's anger*, and the utmoſt of what omnipotent juſtice can do to ſinners? *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

One would think, this were miſery enough, and needed no farther aggravation: but yet it hath two terrible ones; from the remembrance of paſt pleaſures, and the deſpair of any future eaſe and remedy.

The remembrance of paſt pleaſure makes preſent ſufferings more ſharp and ſenſible. For as nothing commends pleaſure more, and gives a quicker reliſh to happineſs, than precedent pain and ſuffering, (for perhaps there is not a greater pleaſure in the world, than in the ſudden eaſe which a man finds after a ſharp fit of the ſtone); ſo nothing enrageth affliction more, and ſets a keener edge upon miſery, than to paſs into great pain immediately out of a ſtate of eaſe and pleaſure. This was the ſtinging aggravation of the rich man's torment,

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that *in his lifetime he had received his good things, and had fared ſo deliciouſly every day.*

But the greateſt aggravation of all is, the deſpair of any future eaſe and remedy. The duration of this miſery is ſet forth to us in ſcripture by ſuch expreſſions as do ſignify the longeſt and moſt interminable duration: *Depart, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire,* Matth. xxv. 41.; and Mark ix. 44. *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* And in the Revelation it is ſaid, that *the wicked ſhall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever,* without intermiſſion, and without end. And this ſurely is the perfection of miſery, for a man to lie under the greateſt torments, and to be in deſpair of ever finding the leaſt eaſe.

Let us now compare things together; on the one hand the ſufferings of good men for a good conſcience, and the reward that follows them; and, on the other hand, the enjoyments of ſin, and the miſchief and miſery that attend them, and will certainly overtake them in this world, or in the next; and then we ſhall eaſily diſcern which of theſe is to be preferred in a wiſe man's choice.

And indeed the choice is ſo very plain, that a man muſt be very ſtrangely forſaken of his reaſon, and blinded by ſenſe, who does not prefer that courſe of life which will probably make him happier in this world, but moſt certainly in the next.

IV. There remains now only the fourth and laſt particular to be ſpoken to, *viz.* ſuppoſing this choice to be reaſonable, to inquire whence it comes to paſs, that ſo many make a quite contrary choice. How is it that the greateſt part of mankind are ſo widely miſtaken, as to prefer the temporary enjoyments of ſin before conſcience and religion; eſpecially if it be attended with great afflictions and ſufferings? And of this I ſhall give you as brief an account as I can, and ſo conclude this diſcourſe.

This wrong choice generally proceeds from one or both of theſe two cauſes; from want of faith, or from want of conſideration, or of both.

1. One great reaſon why men make ſo imprudent a choice, is unbelief; either the want of faith, or the weakneſs

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weakneſs of it. Either men do not believe the recompences of another life, or they are not ſo firmly perſuaded of the reality of them. If men do not at all believe theſe things, there is no foundation for religion: for *he that cometh unto God*, (that is, he that thinks of being religious), *muſt believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*; as the Apoſtle reaſons in the beginning of this chapter.

But I hope there are but few that are, or can be infidels, as to theſe great and fundamental principles of religion. But it is to be feared, that the faith of a great many is but weak and wavering: their faith is rather negative; they do not diſbelieve theſe things, but they are not firmly perſuaded of them; their faith is rather an opinion, than a rooted and well-grounded perſuaſion; and therefore no wonder if it be not ſo ſtrong and vigorous a principle of action, like the faith of Abraham and Moſes, and other worthies mentioned in this chapter. For where faith is in its full ſtrength and vigour, it will have proportionable effects upon the reſolutions and wills of men; but where it is but weak, it is of little or no efficacy. And this is the true reaſon why ſo many forſake religion, and cleave to this preſent world; and when it comes to the puſh, chuſe rather to ſin, than to ſuffer; and will rather quit the truth, than endure perſecution for it.

Theſe are they whom our Saviour deſcribes, *who receive the word with joy, and endure for a while; but when tribulation and perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the word, preſently they are offended:* not that they did not believe the word, but their faith had taken no deep root, and therefore it withered. The weakneſs and wavering of mens faith makes them unſtable and inconſtant in their courſe; becauſe they are not of one mind, but divided betwixt two intereſts, that of this world, and the other; and *the double-minded man* (as St. James tells us) *is unſtable in all his ways.*

It is generally a true rule, So much wavering as we ſee in the actions and lives of men, ſo much weakneſs there is in their faith; and therefore he that would know what any man firmly believes, let him attend to his actions more than to his profeſſions.

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If any man live ſo as no man that heartily believes the Chriſtian religion can live, it is not credible, that ſuch a man doth firmly believe the Chriſtian religion. He ſays he does; but there is a greater evidence in the caſe than words: there is *teſtimonium rei;* the man's actions are to the contrary, and they do beſt declare the inward ſenſe of the man. Did men firmly believe, that there is a God that governs the world; and that *he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge it in righteouſneſs;* and that all mankind ſhall ſhortly appear before him, and give an account of themſelves, and all their actions, to him; and that thoſe who have *kept the faith, and a good conſcience,* and have *lived ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world,* ſhall be unſpeakably and eternally happy; but *the fearful and unbelieving,* thoſe who, out of fear or intereſt, have deſerted the faith, or lived wicked lives, *ſhall have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimſtone:* I ſay, were men firmly perſuaded of theſe things, it is hardly credible, that any man ſhould make a wrong choice, and forſake the ways of truth and righteouſneſs, upon any temptation whatſoever.

Faith, even in temporal matters, is a mighty principle of action, and will make men to attempt and undergo ſtrange and difficult things. The faith of the goſpel ought to be much more operative and powerful; becauſe the objects of hope and fear which it preſents to us, are far greater and more conſiderable than any thing that this world can tempt or terrify us withal.

Would we but by faith make preſent to our minds the inviſible things of another world, the happineſs of heaven, and the terrors of hell; and were we as verily perſuaded of them, as if they were in our view, how ſhould we deſpiſe all the pleaſures and terrors of this world; and with what eaſe ſhould we reſiſt and repel all thoſe temptations which would ſeduce us from our duty, or draw us into ſin!

A firm and unſhaken belief of theſe things would effectually remove all thoſe mountains of difficulty and diſcouragement which men fancy to themſelves in the ways of religion. *To him that believeth all things are poſſible,* and moſt things would be eaſy.

2. Another

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2. Another reason of this wrong choice is, want of consideration; for this would strengthen our faith, and make it more vigorous and powerful. And indeed a faith which is well rooted and established, doth suppose a wise and deep consideration of things: and the want of this is a great cause of the fatal miscarriage of men; that they do not sit down, and consider with themselves seriously how much religion is their interest, and how much it will cost them to be true to it, and to persevere in it to the end.

We suffer ourselves to be governed by sense, and to be transported with present things; but do not consider our future and lasting interest, and the whole duration of an immortal soul. And this is the reason why so many men are hurried away by the present and sensible delights of this world, because they will not take time to think of what will be hereafter.

For it is not to be imagined, but that the man who hath seriously considered what sin is, the shortness of its pleasure, and the eternity of its punishment, should resolve to forsake sin, and to live a holy and virtuous life.

To conclude this whole discourse: If men did but seriously believe the great principles of religion; the being and the providence of God; the immortality of their souls; the glorious rewards and the dreadful punishments of another world; they could not possibly make so imprudent a choice, as we see a great part of mankind to do; they could not be induced to forsake God and religion for any temporal interest and advantage; to renounce the favour of heaven, and all their hopes of happiness in another world, for any thing that this world can afford, nay not for the whole world, if it were offered to them. For, as our Saviour reasons in this very case, of forsaking our religion for any temporal interest or consideration, *what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Whenever any of us, are tempted in this kind, let that solemn declaration of our Saviour, and our Judge, be continually in our minds: *He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven: but whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my*

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words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed, when he ſhall come in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels.

And we have great cauſe to thank God, to ſee ſo many in this day of trial, and hour of temptation, to adhere with ſo much reſolution and conſtancy to their holy religion, and to prefer *the keeping of faith, and a good conſcience*, to all earthly conſiderations and advantages.

And this very thing, that ſo many hold their religion ſo faſt, and are ſo loth to part with it, gives great hopes that they intend to make good uſe of it, and to frame their lives according to the holy rules and precepts of it; which alone can give us peace whilſt we live, and comfort when we come to die; and, after death, ſecure to us the poſſeſſion of a happineſs large as our wiſhes, and laſting as our ſouls.

To which God, of his infinite goodneſs, bring us all, for his mercy's ſake, in Jeſus Chriſt. To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

SERMON LVIII.

Of conſtancy in the profeſſion of the true religion.

HEB. x. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

THE main ſcope and deſign of this epiſtle to the Hebrews, is, to perſuade the Jews who were newly converted to Chriſtianity, to continue ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of that holy and excellent religion which they had embraced; and not to be removed from it, either by the ſubtile inſinuations of their brethren the Jews, who pretended that they were in poſ-

ſeſſion

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session of the true ancient religion, and the only true church of God upon earth; or by the terror of the Heathen persecution, which was so hot against them at that time. And to this end the author of this epistle doth, by great variety of arguments, demonstrate the excellency of the Christian religion above the Jewish dispensation; and shews at large, that in all those respects upon which the Jews valued themselves, and their religion, (as, namely, upon the account of their lawgiver, their high priests, and their sacrifices), the Christian religion had every way the advantage of them.

And having made this clear, he concludes with an earnest exhortation to them, to continue stedfast in the profession of this excellent religion, which was revealed to them by *the Son of God*, the true propitiatory sacrifice, and the great *high priest of their profession*, and into which they had solemnly been initiated and admitted by baptism, ℣ 19. 20. 21. 22. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith;* that is, let us sincerely serve God, with a firm persuasion of the truth and excellency of this holy religion, into the profession whereof we were solemnly admitted by baptism: for that is undoubtedly the meaning of the following words, ℣ 22. *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water;* the *water* with which our bodies are washed in baptism signifying our spiritual regeneration, and *the purging our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God.* From all which he concludes, *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* This refers to that solemn profession of faith which was made by all Christians at their baptism; and which is contained in the ancient creed of the Christian church, called by the ancient fathers *the rule of faith.*

Let us hold fast, κατέχωμεν, *let us firmly retain*; the same with κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας, chap. iv. 14. *Seeing then we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us take fast hold of our profession.*

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profession. So here in the text, the Apostle, upon the same consideration, exhorts Christians *to retain*, or *hold fast* τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος, *the confession*, or *profession of their hope*: that is, the hope of the resurrection of the dead, and everlasting life, which was the conclusion of that faith, or creed, whereof in baptism they made a solemn profession. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith*, or *hope*, *without wavering*: the word is ἀκλινῆ, *inflexible*, *unmoveable*, *steddy*; and *not apt to waver*, *and be shaken* by every wind of contrary doctrine, nor by the blasts and storms of persecution. *For he is faithful that hath promised.* If we continue faithful and steddy to God, he will be faithful to make good all the promises he hath made to us.

In the words thus explained there are two things which I shall distinctly consider.

1. The exhortation: *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* And,

2. The argument or encouragement used to inforce it: *He is faithful that promised.* I begin with the

First, The exhortation to be constant and steddy in the profession of the Christian religion: *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* In the handling of this, and that we may the better understand the true meaning of this exhortation here in the text, I shall do these two things.

1. I shall shew negatively, wherein this constancy and steddiness in the profession of the true religion does not consist. And here I shall remove one or two things, which are thought by some to be inconsistent with constancy and stedfastness in religion.

2. I shall shew positively what is implied in a constant and steddy profession of the true religion.

First, I shall shew negatively, what constancy and stedfastness in the profession of the true religion does not imply. And there are two things which are thought by some to be implied in *holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering.*

1. That men should not take the liberty to examine their religion, and inquire into the grounds and reasons of it.

2. That men should obstinately refuse to hear any reasons

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ſons that can be brought againſt the true religion, as they think, which they have once entertained.

I. That men ſhould not take the liberty to examine their religion, and to inquire into the grounds and reaſons of it. This, I think, is ſo far from being forbidden in this exhortation, that, on the contrary, I doubt not to make it appear, that a free and impartial inquiry into the grounds and reaſons of our religion, and a thorough trial and examination of them, is one of the beſt means to confirm and eſtabliſh us in the profeſſion of it: I mean, that all perſons that are capable of it, ſhould do it, and that they will find great benefit and advantage by it. For I do not think, that this is a duty equally and indifferently incumbent upon all; nor indeed fit and proper for all perſons; becauſe all are not equally capable of doing it. There are two ſorts of perſons that are in a great meaſure incapable of doing it.

1. Children.

2. Such grown perſons as are of a very mean and low capacity, and improvement of underſtanding.

Children are not fit to examine, but only to learn and believe what is taught them by their parents and teachers. They are fit to have the fear of God, and the principles of the true religion, inſtilled into them; but they are by no means fit to diſcern between a true and falſe religion, and to chuſe for themſelves, and to make a change of their religion; as hath of late been allowed to them in a nation not far from us, and by publick edict declared, that children at ſeven years old are fit to chuſe and to change their religion. Which is the firſt law I ever heard of, that allows children at that age to do any act for themſelves, that is of conſequence and importance to them for the remaining parts of their lives, and which they ſhall ſtand obliged to perform and make good. They are indeed baptized, according to the cuſtom and uſage of the Chriſtian church, in their infancy: but they do not enter into this obligation themſelves; but their ſureties undertake for them, that when they come to age, they ſhall take this promiſe upon themſelves, and confirm and make it good. But ſurely they can do no act for themſelves, and in their own name, at that age, which can be obligatory. They can neither make any contracts

contracts that shall be valid, nor incur any debt, nor oblige themselves by any promise, nor chuse themselves a guardian, nor do any act that may bring them under an inconvenience, when they shall come at age. And can we think them of discretion sufficient at that time, to do a thing of the greatest moment and consequence of all other, and which will concern them to all eternity, namely, to chuse their religion? There is indeed one part of one religion (which we all know) which children at seven years of age are fit (I do not say to judge of, but) to be as fond of, and to practise to as good purpose, as those of riper years; and that is, to worship images, to tell their beads, to say their prayers, and to be present at the service of God in an unknown tongue: and this they are more likely to chuse at that age, than those who are of riper and more improved understandings; and if they do not chuse it at that time, it is ten to one they will not chuse it afterwards. I shall say no more of this, but that it is a very extraordinary law, and such as perhaps was never thought of before, from the beginning of the world. Thus much for children.

As for grown persons, who are of a very low and mean capacity of understanding, and, either by reason of the weakness of their faculties, or other disadvantages which they lie under, are in little or no probability of improving themselves; these are always to be considered as in the condition of children and learners, and therefore must of necessity, in things which are not plain and obvious to the meanest capacities, trust and rely upon the judgment of others. And it is really much wiser and safer for them so to do, than to depend upon their own judgments, and to lean to their own understandings; and such persons, if they be modest and humble, and pray earnestly to God for his assistance and direction, and are careful to practise what they know, and to live up to the best light and knowledge which they have, shall not miscarry, merely for want of those farther degrees of knowledge which they had no capacity nor opportunity to attain; because their ignorance is unavoidable, and God will require no more of them than he hath given them, and will not call them to account for the improvement of those talents which he never committed to them.

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And if they be led into any dangerous error, by the negligence or ill conduct of those under whose care and instruction the providence of God permitted them to be placed, God will not impute it to them as a fault; because, in the circumstances in which they were, they took the best and wisest course that they could, to come to the knowledge of the truth, by being willing to learn what they could of those whom they took to be wiser than themselves.

But for such persons who, by the maturity of their age, and by the natural strength and clearness of their understandings, or by the due exercise and improvement of them, are capable of inquiring into and understanding the grounds of their religion, and discerning the difference betwixt truth and error, (I do not mean in unnecessary points, and matters of deepest learning and speculation, but in matters necessary to salvation); it is certainly very reasonable, that such persons should examine their religion, and understand the reasons and grounds of it.

And this must either be granted to be reasonable, or else every man must continue in that religion in which he happens to be fixed by education, or for any other reason to pitch upon, when he comes to years, and makes his free choice. For if this be a good principle, That no man is to examine his religion, but take it as it is, and to believe it, and rest satisfied with it; then every man is to remain in the religion which he first lights upon, whether by choice, or the chance of his education. For he ought not to change but upon reason; and reason he can have none, unless he be allowed to examine his religion, and to compare it with others, that by the comparison he may discern which is best, and ought in reason to be preferred in his choice. For to him that will not, or is not permitted to search into the grounds of any religion, all religions are alike; as all things are of the same colour to him that is always kept in the dark; or if he happens to come into the light, dares not open his eyes, and make use of them to discern the different colours of things.

But this is evidently and at first sight unreasonable; because, at this rate, every man that hath once entertained an

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an error, and a false religion, must for ever continue in it: for if he be not allowed to examine it, he can never have reason to change; and to make a change without reason, is certainly unreasonable, and mere vanity and inconstancy.

And yet, for ought I can see, this is the principle which the church of Rome doth, with great zeal and earnestness, inculcate upon their people; discouraging all doubts and inquiries about their religion, as temptations of the devil; and all examinations of the grounds and reasons of their religion, as an inclination and dangerous step towards heresy. For what else can they mean, by taking the scriptures out of the hands of the people, and locking them up from them in an unknown tongue; by requiring them absolutely to submit their judgments, and to resign them up to that which they are pleased to call the Catholick church, and implicitly to believe as she believes, though they know not what that is? This is, in truth, to believe as their priest tells them; for that is all the teaching part of the church, and all the rule of faith that the common people are acquainted with.

And it is not sufficient to say in this matter, that when men are in the truth, and of the right religion, and in the bosom of the true church, they ought to rest satisfied, and to examine and inquire no farther: for this is manifestly unreasonable, and that upon these three accounts.

1. Because this is a plain and shameful begging of the thing in question; and that which every church, and every religion, doth almost with equal confidence pretend to, that theirs is the only right religion, and the only true church. And these pretences are all alike reasonable to him that never examined the grounds of any of them, nor hath compared them together. And therefore it is the vainest thing in the world for the church of Rome to pretend, that all religions in the world ought to be examined but theirs; because theirs, and none else, is the true religion. For this which they say so confidently of it, that it is the true religion, no man can know till he hath examined it, and searched into the grounds of it, and hath considered the objections which are against it. So that it is fond partiality to say, that their religion is not to be examined by the people that profess it;

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it; but that all other religions ought to be examined; or rather, becauſe they are different from that which they preſume to be the only true religion, ought to be condemned at all adventures, without any farther inquiry: this, I ſay, is fond partiality; becauſe every religion, and every church, may, for ought that appears to any man that is not permitted to examine things impartially, ſay the ſame for themſelves, and with as much reaſon: and if ſo, then either every religion ought to permit itſelf to be examined; or elſe no man ought to examine his own religion, whatever it be; and conſequently Jews, and Turks, and Heathens, and hereticks, ought all to continue as they are, and none of them to change; becauſe they cannot reaſonably change without examining both that religion which they leave, and that which they embrace inſtead of it.

2. Admitting this pretence were true, that they are the true church, and have the true religion, this is ſo far from being a reaſon why they ſhould not permit it to be examined, that, on the contrary, it is one of the beſt reaſons in the world why they ſhould allow it to be examined, and why they may ſafely ſuffer it to be ſo. They ſhould permit it to be tried, that men may, upon good reaſon, be ſatisfied that it is the true religion. And they may ſafely ſuffer it to be done; becauſe, if they be ſure that the grounds of their religion be firm and good, I am ſure they will be never the worſe for being examined and looked into. But I appeal to every man's reaſon, whether it be not an ill ſign, that they are not ſo ſure that the grounds of their religion are ſolid and firm, and ſuch as will abide the trial, that they are ſo very loth to have them ſearched into and examined? This cannot but tempt a wiſe man to ſuſpect, that their church is not founded upon a rock; and that they themſelves know ſomething that is amiſs in their religion, which makes them ſo loth to have it tried, and brought to the touch.

3. It is certain among all Chriſtians, that the doctrine preached by the Apoſtles was the true faith of Chriſt; and yet they never forbad the Chriſtians to examine whether it was ſo or not: nay, on the contrary, they frequently exhort them to try and examine their religion, and whether that doctrine which they had delivered to

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them was the true faith of Christ. So St. Paul, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves.* And again, 1 Thess. v. 21. *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good;* intimating to us, that, in order to the holding fast the profession of our faith, it is requisite to prove and try it. And so likewise St. John, 1 epist. iv. 1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* And he gives a very notable mark whereby we may know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. The spirit of error carries on a worldly interest and design; and the doctrines of it tend to secular power and greatness: ℣ 5. *They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.* Acts xvii. 11. St. Luke commends it, as an argument of a more noble and generous spirit in the Bereans, that they examined the doctrine which the Apostles preached, whether it were agreeable to the scriptures; and this without disparagement to their infallibility: *These* (saith he) *were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* They were ready to receive the word; but not blindly, and with an implicit faith; but using due care to examine the doctrines which they were taught, and to see if they were agreeable to that divine revelation of the holy scriptures which they had before received. It seems they were not willing to admit and swallow contradictions in their faith. And we desire no more of the church of Rome, than that they would encourage the people to *search the scriptures daily*, and to examine whether their doctrines be according to them. We would be glad to hear the Pope and a general council commend to the people *the searching of the scriptures*, and to try their definitions of faith and decrees of worship by that rule, to see whether what they have defined, and decreed to be believed and practised, be agreeable to it; their worship of images, their solemn invocation of angels, and of the blessed virgin, and the saints departed, the sacrament under one kind only, the publick prayers and service of God in an unknown tongue, the frequent repetition of the propitia-

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tory ſacrifice of Chriſt's body and blood in the maſs. Had the Bereans been at the council of Trent, and pleaded their right to *ſearch the ſcriptures, whether thoſe things were ſo*, I doubt they would have been thought very troubleſome and impertinent, and would not have been praiſed by the Pope and council for their pains, as they are by St. Luke.

You ſee then, upon the whole matter, that it is a very groundleſs and ſuſpicious pretence of the church of Rome, that becauſe they are infallibly in the right, and theirs is the true religion, therefore their people muſt not be permitted to examine it. The doctrine of the Apoſtles was undoubtedly the true faith of Chriſt; and yet they not only permitted the people to examine it, but exhorted and encouraged them ſo to do, and commended them for it: and any man that hath the ſpirit of a man, muſt abhor to ſubmit to this ſlavery, not to be allowed to examine his religion, and to inquire freely into the grounds and reaſons of it; and would break with any church in the world upon this ſingle point; and would tell them plainly, If your religion be too good to be examined, I doubt it is too bad to be believed.

If it be ſaid, that the allowing of this liberty is the way to make people perpetually doubting and unſettled; I do utterly deny this; and do, on the contrary, with good reaſon affirm, that it is apt to have the contrary effect; there being in reaſon no better way to eſtabliſh any man in the belief of any thing, than to let him ſee, that there are very good grounds and reaſons for what he believes; which no man can ever ſee, that is not permitted to examine whether there be ſuch reaſons or not. So that, beſides the reaſonableneſs of the thing, it is of great benefit and advantage to us; and that upon theſe accounts.

1. To arm us againſt ſeducers. He that hath examined his religion, and tried the grounds of it, is moſt able to maintain them, and make them good againſt all aſſaults that may be made upon us, to move us from our ſtedfaſtneſs: whereas he that hath not examined, and conſequently does not underſtand the reaſons of his religion, is liable to be *toſſed to and fro, and to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſleight of men, and the cunning craftineſs of thoſe that lie in wait to deceive.*

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ceive. For when he is attempted, he will either defend his religion or not. If he undertake the defence of it, before he hath examined the grounds of it, he makes himſelf an eaſy prey to every crafty man that will ſet upon him; he expoſeth at once himſelf to danger, and his religion to diſgrace. If he decline the defence of it, he muſt be forced to take ſanctuary in that ignorant and obſtinate principle, That becauſe he is of an infallible church, and ſure that he is in the right, therefore he never did nor will examine whether he be ſo or not. But how is he, or can he be ſure, that he is in the right, if he have no other reaſon for it, but his confidence, and his being *wiſer in his own conceit, than ſeven men that can render a reaſon?* It is a ſhameful thing in a wiſe man, who is able to give a good reaſon of all other actions and parts of his life, to be able to ſay nothing for his religion, which concerns him more than all the reſt.

2. To examine and underſtand the grounds of our religion, will be a good means (by the aſſiſtance of God's grace) to keep us conſtant to it, even under the fiery trial. When it comes to this, that a man muſt ſuffer for his religion, he had need to be well eſtabliſhed in the belief of it; which no man can ſo well be, as he that in ſome meaſure underſtands the grounds and reaſons of his belief. A man would be very well aſſured of the truth and goodneſs of that for which he would lay down his life; otherwiſe he dies as a fool dies, he knows not for what. A man would be loth to ſet ſuch a ſeal to a blank, I mean, to that which he hath no ſufficient ground and reaſon to believe to be true; which whether he hath or not, no man that hath not examined the grounds of his religion can be well aſſured of. This St. Peter preſcribes as the beſt preparative for ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake, 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15. *But if ye ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but ſanctify the Lord God in your hearts;* (that is, make him the great object of your dread and truſt): *and be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you.*

II. The *holding faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*, doth not imply, that men ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any reaſon againſt that religion which they have

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have embraced, and think to be the true religion. As men should examine before they chuse, so after they have chosen, they should be ready to be better informed, if better reason can be offered. No man ought to think himself so infallible, as to be privileged from hearing reason, and from having his doctrines and dictates tried by that test.

Our blessed Saviour himself, the most infallible person that ever was in the world, and who *declared the truth which he had heard of God*; yet he offered himself and his doctrine to this trial: John viii. 46. *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* that is, of falshood and error: *and if I speak the truth, why do ye not believe me?* He was sure he spake the truth; and yet for all that, if they could convince him of error and mistake, he was ready to hear any reason they could bring to that purpose. Though a man be never so sure that he is in the true religion, and never so resolved to continue constant and stedfast in it; yet reason is always to be heard when it is fairly offered. And as we ought always to be *ready to give an answer to those who ask a reason of the hope* and faith *that is in us*, so ought we likewise to be ready to hear the reasons which others do fairly offer against our opinion and persuasion in religion, and to debate the matter with them; that if we be in the right, and they in the wrong, we may rectify their mistake, and *instruct them in meekness, if God peradventure may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.*

We are not only to examine our religion before we peremptorily fix upon it, but after we are, as we think upon the best reason, established and settled in it. Though we ought not to doubt and waver in our religion upon every slight and trifling objection that can be brought against it; yet we ought always to have an ear open to hear reason, and consider any thing of weight and moment that can be offered to us about it. For it is a great disparagement to truth, and argues a distrust of the goodness of our cause and religion, to be afraid to hear what can be said against it; as if truth were so weak, that in every conflict it were in danger to be baffled and run down, and go by the worst; and as if the reasons that could be brought against it, were too hard for it,

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and not to be encountered by thoſe forces which truth has on its ſide.

We have that honeſt confidence of the goodneſs of our cauſe and religion, that we do not fear what can be ſaid againſt it; and therefore we do not forbid our people to examine the objections of our adverſaries, and to read the beſt books they can write againſt it. But the church of Rome are ſo *wiſe in their generation*, that they will not permit thoſe of their communion to hear or read what can be ſaid againſt them: nay, they will not permit the people the uſe of the holy ſcriptures, which they with us acknowledge to be at leaſt an eſſential part of the rule of faith. They tell their people, that after they are once of their church and religion, they ought not to hear any reaſons againſt it: and though they be never ſo ſtrong, they ought not to entertain any doubt concerning it; becauſe all doubting is a temptation of the devil, and a mortal ſin. But ſurely that church is not to be heard, which will not hear reaſon; nor that religion to be much admired, which will not allow thoſe that have once embraced it, to hear it ever after debated and examined. This is a very ſuſpicious buſineſs; and argues, that either they have not truth on their ſide, or that truth is a weak, and pitiful, and ſneaking thing, and not able to make its party good againſt error.

I ſhould now have proceeded, in the *ſecond* place, to ſhew poſitively what is implied in *holding faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*; and then to have conſidered the argument and encouragement hereto, *Becauſe he is faithful that promiſed*. But I ſhall proceed no farther at this time.

SERMON

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SERMON LIX.

Of constancy in the profession of the true religion.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.

The second sermon on this text.

I Have already made entrance into these words, which I told you do contain in them,

1. An exhortation to *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.*

2. An argument or encouragement thereto: *Because he is faithful that promised.* If we continue stedfast and faithful to God, we shall find him faithful to us, in making good all the promises which he hath made to us, whether of aid and support, or of recompence and reward of our fidelity to him.

I have begun to handle the first part of the text, *viz.* the Apostle's exhortation to Christians to be constant and steddy in their religion: *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* The word ἀκλινῆ, which we render *without wavering*, signifies *inflexible* and *unmoveable; not apt to waver*, and to be *shaken with every wind of* contrary *doctrine*, nor by the blasts and storms of persecution. And that we might the better comprehend the full and true meaning of this exhortation, I propounded to do these two things.

1. To shew negatively, wherein this constancy and steddiness in the profession of the true religion doth not consist. And,

2. To shew positively, what is implied and intended here by the Apostle in *holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering.*

First, To shew negatively, wherein this constancy and steddiness in the profession of the true religion doth not consist.

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consist. This I spake to the last day; and shewed at large, that there are two things which are not contained and intended in this exhortation.

1. That men should not have the liberty to examine their religion, and to inquire into the grounds and reasons of it; such I mean as are capable of this examination and inquiry: which some, I shewed, are not; as children, who, while they are in that state, are only fit to learn and believe what is taught them by their parents and teachers: and likewise such grown persons, as either by the natural weakness of their faculties, or by some great disadvantage of education, are of a very low and mean capacity and improvement of understanding. These are to be considered as in the condition of children and learners; and therefore must of necessity trust and rely upon the judgment of others.

2. This *holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering*, does not imply, that when men upon examination and inquiry are settled, as they think and verily believe, in the true religion, they should obstinately refuse to hear any reason that can be offered against them. Both these principles I shewed to be unreasonable, and arguments of a bad cause and religion.

I shall now proceed to explain the meaning of this exhortation, to *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*, by shewing, in the

Second place, what it is that is implied in the constant and steddy profession of the true faith and religion, namely, that when, upon due search and examination, we are fully satisfied that it is the true religion which we have embraced, or, as St. Peter expresses it, 1 epist. v. 12. that *this is the true grace of God wherein we stand*; that then we should adhere stedfastly to it, and *hold it fast*, and not suffer it to be wrested from us, nor ourselves to be moved from it, by any pretences, or insinuations, or temptations whatsoever: for there is a great deal of difference between the confidence and stedfastness of an ignorant man, who hath never considered things, and inquired into the grounds of them; and the assurance and settlement of one who hath been well instructed in his religion, and hath taken pains to search and examine to the bottom, the grounds and reasons of what he holds

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and profeſſeth to believe. The firſt is mere wilfulneſs and obſtinacy. A man hath entertained and drank in ſuch principles of religion by education, or hath taken them up by chance; but he hath no reaſon for them: and yet, however he came by them, he is reſolved to hold them faſt, and not to part with them. The other is the reſolution and conſtancy of a wiſe man: he hath embraced his religion upon good grounds, and he ſees no reaſon to alter it; and therefore is reſolved to ſtick to it, and to *hold faſt the profeſſion of it* ſtedfaſtly to the end. And to this purpoſe there are many exhortations and cautions ſcattered up and down the writings of the holy Apoſtles; as that we ſhould be *ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, eſtabliſhed in the truth, rooted and grounded in the faith;* and that we ſhould *hold faſt that which is good,* and not ſuffer ourſelves *to be carried to and fro with every wind of doctrine, through the ſleight of men, and the cunning craftineſs of thoſe that lie in wait to deceive;* that we ſhould *not be removed from him that hath called us unto the grace of Chriſt, unto another goſpel;* that we ſhould *ſtand faſt in one ſpirit and one mind, ſtriving together for the faith of the goſpel, and be in nothing terrified by our adverſaries;* and that, if occaſion be, we ſhould *contend earneſtly for the faith which was once delivered unto the ſaints;* and here in the text, that we ſhould *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering.* For the explaining of this, I ſhall do two things.

1. Conſider what it is that we are to *hold faſt,* namely, *the profeſſion of our faith.* And,

2. How we are to *hold it faſt;* or, what is implied in *holding faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering.*

I. What it is that we are *to hold faſt,* namely, *the profeſſion of our faith;* i. e. of the Chriſtian faith or religion: for I told you before that this *profeſſion* or *confeſſion of our faith,* or *hope,* (as the word properly ſignifies), is an alluſion to that profeſſion of faith which was made by all thoſe who were admitted members of the Chriſtian church by baptiſm; of which the Apoſtle makes mention immediately before the text, when he ſays, *Let us draw near in full aſſurance of faith, having our hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience, and our bodies waſhed with pure water:* and then it follows, *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion*

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profeſſion of our faith without wavering; the profeſſion of faith which we made in our baptiſm, and which by the ancient fathers is called *the rule of faith*, and which is now contained in that which we call *the Apoſtles creed*, and which is called by St. Paul, Rom. vi. 17. *the form of doctrine which was delivered to them*, i. e. to all Chriſtians; and 2 Tim. i. 13. *the form of ſound words: Hold faſt* (ſaith he) *the form of ſound words, which thou haſt heard of me, in faith and love which is in Chriſt Jeſus;* and by St. Jude, *the faith which was once delivered unto the ſaints.*

So that it is the firſt and ancient faith of the Chriſtian church, delivered to them by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, which we are here exhorted to *hold faſt;* the neceſſary and fundamental articles of the Chriſtian faith; and, by conſequence, all thoſe truths which have a neceſſary connexion with thoſe articles, and are implied in them, and by plain conſequence are to be deduced from them. It is not the doubtful and uncertain traditions of men, nor the partial dictates and doctrines of any church, ſince the primitive times, which are not contained in the holy ſcriptures, and the ancient creeds of the Chriſtian church, but have been ſince declared and impoſed upon the Chriſtian world, though with never ſo confident a pretence of antiquity in the doctrines, and of infallibility in the propoſers of them: theſe are no part of that faith which we are either to profeſs or to hold faſt; becauſe we have no reaſon to admit the pretences, by virtue whereof thoſe doctrines or practices are impoſed; being able to make it good, and having effectually done it, that thoſe doctrines are not of primitive antiquity; and that the church which propoſeth them, hath no more claim to infallibility, than all other parts of the Chriſtian church; which, ſince the Apoſtles time, is none at all.

In a word, no other doctrines which are not ſufficiently revealed in ſcripture, either in expreſs terms, or by plain and neceſſary conſequence; nor any rites of worſhip, nor matters of practice, which are not commanded in ſcripture, are to be eſteemed any part of that faith in religion, *the profeſſion* whereof the Apoſtle here commands all Chriſtians to *hold faſt without wavering;*

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much leſs any doctrines or practices which are repugnant to the word of God, and to the faith and practice of the firſt ages of Chriſtianity; of which kind I ſhall have occaſion, in my following diſcourſe, to inſtance in ſeveral particulars. In the mean time, I ſhall only obſerve, that that faith and religion which we profeſs, and which, by God's grace, we have ever *held faſt*, is that which hath been acknowledged by all Chriſtian churches in all ages to have been the ancient Catholick and Apoſtolick faith, and cannot (as to any part or tittle of it) be denied to be ſo, even by the church of Rome herſelf.

I proceed to the

II. Second thing which I propoſed to conſider, namely, How we are to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith*; or, what is implied by the Apoſtle in this exhortation, *to hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*. And I think, theſe following particulars may very well be ſuppoſed to be implied in it.

1. That we ſhould *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith*, againſt the confidence of men, without ſcripture or reaſon to ſupport their confidence.

2. And much more againſt the confidence of men, contrary to ſcripture and reaſon, and the common ſenſe of mankind.

3. Againſt all the temptations and terrors of the world.

4. Againſt all vain promiſes of being put into a ſafer condition, and groundleſs hopes of getting to heaven upon eaſier terms in another religion.

5. Againſt all the cunning arts and inſinuations of buſy and diſputing men, whoſe deſign it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to gain proſelytes to their own party and faction. I ſhall go over theſe with as much clearneſs and brevity as I can.

1. We ſhould *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith*, againſt the confidence of men, without ſcripture or reaſon to ſupport that confidence. All religion is either natural or inſtituted. The rule of natural religion is the common reaſon of mankind: the rule of inſtituted religion is divine revelation, or the word of God; which all Chriſtians before the council of Trent did agree to be contained in the holy ſcriptures. So that nothing can pretend

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pretend to be religion, but what can be proved to be ſo one or both of thoſe ways; either by ſcripture, or by reaſon, or by both. And how confident ſoever men may be of opinions deſtitute of this proof, any man that underſtands the grounds of religion will, without any more ado, reject them, for want of this proof; and, notwithſtanding any pretended authority or infallibility of the church that impoſeth them, will have no more conſideration and regard of them, than of the confident dictates and aſſertions of any enthuſiaſt whatſoever; becauſe there is no reaſon to have regard to any man's confidence, if the arguments and reaſons which he brings bear no proportion to it. We ſee in experience, that confidence is generally ill-grounded, and is a kind of paſſion in the underſtanding, and is commonly made uſe of, like fury and force, to ſupply for the weakneſs and want of argument. If a man can prove what he ſays by good argument, there is no need of confidence to back and ſupport it. We may at any time truſt a plain and ſubſtantial reaſon, and leave it to make its own way, and to bear out itſelf. But if the man's reaſons and arguments be not good, his confidence adds nothing of real force to them, in the opinion of wiſe men, and tends only to its own confuſion. Arguments are like powder, which will carry and do execution according to its true ſtrength; and all the reſt is but noiſe. And generally none are ſo much to be ſuſpected of error, or a deſign to deceive, as thoſe that pretend moſt confidently to inſpiration and infallibility; as we ſee in all ſorts of enthuſiaſts, who pretend to inſpiration, although we have nothing but their own word for it: for they work no miracles; and all pretence to inſpiration and infallibility, without miracles, whether it be in particular perſons, or in whole churches, is enthuſiaſtical, *i. e.* a pretence to inſpiration, without any proof of it.

And therefore St. Paul was not moved by the boaſting and confidence of the falſe Apoſtles; becauſe they gave no proof and evidence of their divine inſpiration and commiſſion, as he had done; for which he appeals to the ſenſe of men, whether he had not wrought great miracles, which the falſe Apoſtles had not done, though they had the confidence to give out themſelves to be A-

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postles as well as he: 2 Cor. xii. 11. 12. *I am* (says he) *become a fool in glorying, ye have compelled me. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.* And Rev. ii. 2. Christ there commends the church of Ephesus, because *she had tried them which said they were apostles, but were not; and had found them liars.* And as we are not to believe every one that says he is an Apostle; so neither every one that pretends to be a successor of the Apostles, and to be endued with the same spirit of infallibility that they were: for these also, when they are tried, whether they be the successors of the Apostles or not, may be *found liars.* And therefore St. John cautions Christians, *not to believe every spirit,* (that is, every one that pretends to divine inspiration, and the Spirit of God); *but to try the spirits, whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world,* 1 John iv. 1. And therefore the confidence of men in this kind ought not to move us, when their pretence to infallibility is destitute of the proper proof and evidence of it, which is a power of miracles; and when their doctrines and practices have neither the evidence of reason or scripture on their side.

For instance: That the church of Rome is the mother and mistress of all churches; which is one of the new articles of Pope Pius IV.'s creed; and yet there is not one syllable in scripture tending to this purpose. And in reason it cannot be, that any but that which was the first Christian church, should be the mother of all churches; and that the church of Rome certainly was not, and the church of Jerusalem undoubtedly was.

And then, That the Bishop of Rome, as successor of St. Peter there, is the supreme and universal pastor of Christ's church, by divine appointment, as he assumes to himself; and that it is necessary to salvation, for every human creature to be subject to the Bishop of Rome; as is declared in their Canon law, by a constitution of Pope Boniface VIII.; which constitution is confirmed in the last Lateran council: of all which there is not the least mention in scripture, nor any divine appointment to that purpose to be found there. And it is against reason, that all the world should be obliged to

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trudge to Rome for the deciſion of cauſes and differences; which in many, and the moſt weighty matters, are reſerved to the deciſion of that ſee, and can be determined no where elſe. And againſt reaſon likewiſe it is, to found this univerſal ſupremacy in his being ſucceſſor of St. Peter, and to fix it in the Biſhop of Rome, rather than at Antioch; when it is certain, and granted by themſelves, that St. Peter was firſt Biſhop of Antioch, and out of all queſtion that he was Biſhop of Antioch; but not ſo, that he was Biſhop of Rome.

Nor is there any thing in ſcripture for the deliverance of ſouls out of purgatory by the prayers and maſſes of the living. The whole thing is groundleſs, and not agreeable to the conſtant ſuppoſitions of ſcripture concerning a future ſtate. Nor is there any reaſon for it beſides that which is not fit to be given, the wealth and profit which it brings in.

The invocation and worſhip of the bleſſed virgin, and of all the ſaints departed, is deſtitute of all ſcripture warrant or example, and confeſſed by themſelves not to have been owned or practiſed in the three firſt ages of the church, becauſe it looked too like the Heathen idolatry; which deſerves to be well conſidered by thoſe who pretend to derive their whole religion from Chriſt and his Apoſtles by a continued and uninterrupted ſucceſſion. And this practice is likewiſe deſtitute of all colour of reaſon, unleſs we be aſſured, that they hear our prayers in all places; which we cannot be, unleſs they be preſent in all places, which they themſelves do not believe; or that God doth ſome way or other reveal and make known to them the prayers which are made to them, which we cannot poſſibly be aſſured of, but by ſome revelation of God to that purpoſe; which we no where find, nor doth the church of Rome pretend to it.

2. But I proceed to the ſecond thing, namely, that we ſhould much more *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith* and religion, againſt the confidence of men, contrary to ſcripture and reaſon, and the common ſenſe of mankind. For theſe are the chief grounds of certainty, which we can have for or againſt any thing; and if theſe be clearly on our ſide, we ought not to be much moved by the confidence of men concerning any doctrines or practice

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practices of religion which are plainly contrary to theſe. If in points wherein we have this advantage on our ſide, we do not *hold faſt the profeſſion* of our religion, our error and folly are capable of no excuſe. And this advantage we plainly have in ſeveral points and controverſies betwixt us and the church of Rome:

As, in the worſhip of images; which is as expreſsly and clearly forbidden in the ſecond commandment, and that without any diſtinction, as any other thing is forbidden in the whole Bible. And that it is ſo forbidden in this commandment, and that this commandment is ſtill in force among Chriſtians, was the univerſal ſenſe of the ancient Chriſtian church.

Prayers, and the ſervice of God, in an unknown tongue, are directly contrary to the very nature and end of religious worſhip, which ought to be a reaſonable ſervice; which it cannot be, if it be not directed by our underſtandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections, But if it be performed in an unknown tongue, our underſtanding can have no part in it; and if we do not underſtand it, it cannot move our affections. And this likewiſe is plainly contrary to ſcripture, namely, to a large diſcourſe of St. Paul's, almoſt throughout a whole chapter; where he purpoſely ſets himſelf to ſhew the unprofitableneſs and groſs abſurdity of praying, or celebrating any other part of religious worſhip, in an unknown tongue. If any part of our religion had been half ſo clearly condemned in ſcripture as this is, which yet is the conſtant and general practice of the church of Rome, we muſt have *lain down in our ſhame, and confuſion would have covered us*; and we muſt either have rejected the authority of the Bible, or have renounced that point of our religion, whatever it had been; though it had been dear to us as our right hand, and our right eye, we muſt, upon ſuch plain evidence of ſcripture againſt it, have *cut it off, and plucked it out, and caſt it from us.*

The like may be ſaid of locking up the ſcriptures from the people in an unknown tongue; contrary to the command of the ſcriptures themſelves, and to the great end and deſign of almighty God in the writing and publiſhing of them; and contrary to the perpetual exhortations and councils of all the ancient fathers of the Chriſtian

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church for a great many ages, not one excepted; they are hardly more frequent, and copious, and earneſt in any argument, than in perſuading people of all ranks and conditions to the conſtant and careful reading of the holy ſcriptures; and contrary to the common reaſon and ſenſe of mankind. For what ſhould men be perſuaded to be acquainted withal, if not with that which is the great inſtrument of our ſalvation? that book which was written on purpoſe to reveal and convey to men the knowledge of God, and of his will, and their duty? What ſhould men be allowed to know, if not that which is the beſt and moſt effectual means to direct and bring them to heaven, or turn them from ſin, and to preſerve them from eternal miſery? When our Saviour would repreſent the beſt and moſt effectual means of bringing men to happineſs, and ſaving them from the eternal torments of hell, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, he brings in Abraham giving the beſt advice he could to the rich man who was in hell, concerning his brethren that were upon earth, how they might prevent their *coming into that place of torment;* and he directs them to the ſcriptures, as the beſt and moſt effectual means to that purpoſe: *They have* (ſays he) *Moſes and the prophets, let them hear them.*

Now, if in the church of God, among the Jews, the ſame courſe had been taken that is now in the church of Rome, the rich man might, and in all reaſon ought to have replied, "Nay, father Abraham, but they have "not Moſes and the prophets, nor are they permitted to "read them in a language that they can underſtand; "and therefore this advice is of no uſe to them:" and then he might with reaſon have preſſed him, as he did, that *one might be ſent to them from the dead, to teſtify unto them.* But it appears, that Abraham was very poſitive and peremptory in this advice; and that he prefers the knowledge of the ſcriptures to any other way and means that could be thought of; and that if this had not its effect to perſuade men to repentance, and to preſerve them from hell, he did not know any thing elſe that was ſo likely to do it: for he concludes, *If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded though one roſe from the dead.* And this is the concluſion of the parable;

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rable; which plainly shews, what was the main scope and design of our Saviour in it, namely, to recommend to us the use of the holy scriptures, as the best and most effectual means which the wisdom of God hath provided for the salvation of mankind.

And now any man would be apt to think, that the declared judgment of our Saviour in the case should go a great way, even with the most infallible church in the world. However, this we must say, that it is in truth a very hard case to which the church of Rome hath reduced men; that it will neither allow them salvation out of their church, nor the best and most effectual means of salvation when they are in it. I might say much more upon this head; but this I hope may be sufficient.

The next instance shall be in the doctrine of transubstantiation; which is contrary to the scriptures, which after consecration so frequently call the elements *bread and wine*; and which, without reason or necessity, puts an absurd and impossible sense upon these words of our Saviour, *This is my body*; which do no more prove transubstantiation, than those words, *This cup is the new testament*, do prove, that the material cup which was used in the sacrament, was substantially changed into the new testament; and no more, than those texts which affirm God to have eyes, and ears, and hands, do prove that he really hath so. But besides the contrariety of this doctrine to scripture, nothing can be more repugnant to reason. It is so big with contradictions, and so surfeited of impossibilities, that it would be endless to reckon them up. And besides all this, it plainly contradicts the clear and constant evidence of four of our five senses; which whoever contradicts, undermines the foundation of all certainty.

And then the communion in one kind is plainly contrary to our Saviour's institution of the sacrament in both kinds, as they themselves acknowledge. And therefore the council of Constance, being sensible of this, was forced to decree it with an express *non obstante* to the institution of Christ, and the practice of the Apostles and the primitive church. And their doctrine of concomitancy, as if the blood were in the flesh, and together with it, will not help the matter: because in the sacrament

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Chriſt's body is repreſented as broken, and pierced, and exhauſted, and drained of its blood; and his blood is repreſented as ſhed and poured out: ſo that one kind can by no means contain and exhibit both.

The next inſtance is, the repetition of Chriſt's propitiatory ſacrifice in the maſs, ſo often as that is celebrated: againſt all reaſon; becauſe the ſacrifice of Chriſt once offered upon the croſs, was a full and perfect propitiation for the ſins of the whole world; and therefore ought not, becauſe it needs not, to be again repeated for that end, in any manner whatſoever. And it is directly contrary to the main ſcope of a great part of this epiſtle to the Hebrews; which ſhews the excellency of the goſpel above the law in this reſpect, that the expiatory ſacrifice of the goſpel was offered once for all; whereas the ſacrifices of the law were perpetually repeated: Chap. vii. 27. ſpeaking of Chriſt, *Who needs not daily, as thoſe high prieſts, to offer up ſacrifices, firſt for his own ſins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himſelf.* Chap. ix. 26. 27. 28. *But once in the end of the world hath he appeared to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf. And as it is appointed for all men once to die; ſo Chriſt was once offered to bear the ſins of many.* And chap. x. 10. *By the which will we are ſanctified, through the offering of the body of Jeſus Chriſt once for all;* and ℣ 12. *But this man, after he had offered one ſacrifice for ſins, for ever ſat down on the right hand of God;* and ℣ 14. *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are ſanctified.* There cannot be plainer texts for any thing in the Bible, than that this propitiatory ſacrifice was never to be repeated.

And whereas they ſay, that the ſacrifice of the maſs is an unbloody ſacrifice; this, inſtead of bringing them off, doth but intangle the matter more: for if blood be offered in the ſacrifice of the maſs, how is it an unbloody ſacrifice? What can be more bloody than blood? and if blood be not offered, how is it propitiatory? ſince the Apoſtle lays it down for a certain rule, That *without ſhedding of blood there is no remiſſion of ſins; i. e.* there can be no propitiation for the ſins of the living or the dead; which the church of Rome affirms there is.

I might have added one or two inſtances more; and then

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then ſhould have proceeded to ſhew, in the third place, that we are to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*, againſt all the temptations and terrors of the world; which is more eſpecially and principally here intended by the Apoſtle in this exhortation. But I ſhall proceed no farther at preſent.

SERMON LX.

Of conſtancy in the profeſſion of the true religion.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

The third ſermon on this text.

IN theſe words, I have told you, are contained,

1. An exhortation to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith* (or *hope*) *without wavering*.

2. An argument or encouragement thereto: *Becauſe he is faithful that promiſed*. I am yet upon the firſt of theſe; the exhortation to Chriſtians, to be conſtant and ſteddy in the profeſſion of their religion: *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*. And that we might the better comprehend the true and full meaning of this exhortation, I ſhewed,

Firſt, Negatively, what is not meant and intended by it. And I mentioned theſe two particulars.

1. The Apoſtle doth not hereby intend, that thoſe who are capable of inquiring into and examining the grounds of their religion, ſhould not have the liberty to do it. Nor,

2. That when, upon due inquiry and examination, men are ſettled, as they think and verily believe, in the true faith and religion, they ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any reaſon that can be offered againſt their preſent perſuaſion. Both theſe I ſhewed to be unreaſonable, and

arguments

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arguments of a bad cause and religion: and therefore neither of them can be intended by the Apostle in this exhortation.

Secondly, I proceeded positively to explain the meaning of this exhortation. And to this purpose I proposed,

I. To consider what it is that we are to *hold fast*, viz. *the confession* or *profession of our faith*; the ancient Christian faith, of which every Christian makes profession in his baptism; for of that the Apostle here speaks, as appears by the context: not the doubtful and uncertain traditions of men, nor the imperious dictates and doctrines of any church not contained in the holy scriptures, imposed upon the Christian church; though with never so confident a pretence of the antiquity of the doctrines proposed, or of the infallibility of the proposers of them. And then I proceeded, in the

II. Second place, to shew, how we are to *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*. And I mentioned these following particulars, as probably implied in the Apostle's exhortation.

1. That we should *hold fast the profession of our faith*, against the confidence of men, without scripture or reason to support their confidence.

2. And much more against the confidence of men, against scripture and reason, and the common sense of mankind.

3. Against all the temptations and terrors of the world.

4. Against all vain promises of being put into a safer condition, and groundless hopes of getting to heaven upon easier terms in another religion.

5. Against all the cunning arts and insinuations of busy and disputing men, whose design it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to gain proselytes to their party and faction.

1. We are to *hold fast the profession of our faith*, against the confidence of men, without scripture or reason to support their confidence. And of this I gave several instances: As, in the pretence of the church of Rome to infallibility, without any proof or evidence of it, either by scripture or miracles; I mean such miracles as are sufficiently attested; for as for their legends, since the wisest among themselves give no credit to them,

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them, I hope they do not expect that we ſhould believe them, or be moved by them: And then their pretence that the church of Rome is the mother and miſtreſs of all churches; which is now made an article of their creed: And that the Biſhop of Rome, as ſucceſſor of St. Peter there, is by divine appointment the ſupreme and univerſal paſtor of Chriſt's church: And that it is neceſſary to ſalvation, for every human creature to be ſubject to him: And, laſtly, their invocation and worſhip of the bleſſed virgin and ſaints departed; without any warrant or example of any ſuch thing, either in ſcripture, or in the practice of the firſt ages of the Chriſtian religion; and without ſufficient ground to believe that they hear the prayers which are put up to them.

2. Much more are we to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith*, againſt the confidence of men, contrary to ſcripture and reaſon, and the common ſenſe of mankind. And here I inſtanced in the worſhip of images; the locking up of the ſcriptures from the people; and celebrating the publick prayers, and ſervice of God, in an unknown tongue; and their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; their communion in one kind; and their daily repetition, in the ſacrifice of the maſs, of the propitiatory ſacrifice of Chriſt, which was offered once for all, and is of eternal virtue and efficacy; and therefore ought not, becauſe it needs not, like Jewiſh ſacrifices under the law, to be repeated.

To theſe inſtances, which I have already ſpoken to, I ſhall add one or two more; as, namely, that to the due adminiſtration of the ſacraments, an intention in the miniſter at leaſt to do what the church does, is requiſite. This is expreſsly defined, and under an anathema upon all that ſhall ſay otherwiſe, by the council of Trent, ſeſſ. 7. can. 11; which is to make the validity and virtue of the ſacraments to depend upon the intention of the prieſt or miniſter. So that if in the adminiſtration of baptiſm, he do not intend to baptize the party he pretends to baptize; then it is no baptiſm; and conſequently the perſon baptized is not made a member of Chriſt's church; nor is any grace or ſpecial benefit conferred upon him; nor is he a Chriſtian. So likewiſe in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, if the prieſt do not

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not intend to consecrate the host, then is it no sacrament; and they that receive it, receive no benefit by it; and (which according to their opinion is a dreadful consequence) by the words of consecration, there is no change made of the elements into the body and blood of Christ, and consequently they that give adoration to the sacrament in such cases, worship bread and wine for God; which is idolatry. And so likewise in their sacrament of penance, though the priest pronounce the words of absolution; yet if he do not intend to absolve the penitent, though he be never so truly penitent, and God on his part is ready to forgive him; yet if the priest do not intend to do so, there is nothing done, and the man is still in his sin. So likewise in ordination, (which is another of their sacraments), if the Bishop do not intend to ordain the man, he is no priest; and all that he does as a priest afterwards, either in administration of baptism or the Lord's supper, or the absolution of penitents, all is vain, and of no effect. Nay in marriage, (which they will needs have to be a sacrament too), if the intention of the priest be wanting, there is nothing done, the contract is nulled; and they that are so married, do really live in adultery, though they do not know it, nor have any suspicion of it.

Now, this is contrary to scripture, and the whole tenor of the gospel, which promiseth the benefit and efficacy of the sacraments to all those that perform the conditions of the covenant which are required on their parts, and declares forgiveness of sins to those who confess them to God, and truly repent of them.

And there is not the least intimation given in the Bible, that the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments does depend upon the intention of him that administers them; or that the forgiveness of sins is suspended upon the intention or absolution of the priest, but only upon the sincere resolution of the penitent. And surely nothing can be more absurd, and contrary to reason, than that when men have performed all the conditions which the gospel requires; yet they should, notwithstanding this, be deprived of all the blessings and benefits which God hath promised, and intends to confer upon them, because the priest hath not the same intention. So that when a man hath

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hath done all that he can *to work out his own ſalvation*, he ſhall be never the nearer, only for want of that which is wholly out of his power, the right intention of the prieſt.

Beſides that after all their boaſts of the ſafe condition of men in their church, and the moſt certain and infallible means of ſalvation to be had in it, this one principle, That the intention of the prieſt is neceſſary to the validity and virtue of the ſacraments, puts the ſalvation of men upon the greateſt hazard and uncertainty; and ſuch as it is impoſſible for any man either to diſcover or prevent, unleſs he had ſome certain way to know the heart and intention of the prieſt. For, upon theſe terms, who can know whether any man be a prieſt, and really ordained, or not? nay, whether he be a Chriſtian, and have been truly baptized, or not? and, conſequently, whether any of his adminiſtrations be valid, and we have any benefit and advantage by them? becauſe all this depends upon the knowledge of that which we neither do nor can know.

So that when a man hath conſcientiouſly done all that God requires of any man to make him capable of ſalvation; yet, without any fault of his, the want of intention in an idle-minded man, may fruſtrate all. And though the man hath been baptized, and do truly believe the goſpel, and hath ſincerely repented of his ſins, and lived a moſt holy life; yet all this may ſignify nothing, and, after all, he may be no Chriſtian, becauſe his baptiſm was invalid. And all the promiſes of God to the means of ſalvation which his goodneſs and wiſdom hath preſcribed, may be of no efficacy, if the prieſt do not intend, in the adminiſtration of the ſacraments, to do that which God and the church intend.

Now, if this be true, there is certainly no church in the world, in which the ſalvation of men runs ſo many hazards; and yet all this hazard and uncertainty has its riſe from a ſcholaſtical point, which is directly contrary to all the notions of mankind concerning the goodneſs of God, and to the clear reaſon of the thing, and to the conſtant tenor of the goſpel; and which was never aſſerted by any of the ancient fathers, much leſs defined by any council before that of Trent: ſo that it is a doctrine

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ctrine new and needleſs, and in the neceſſary conſequences of it unreaſonable and abſurd to the utmoſt degree.

The laſt inſtance I ſhall mention is, their rule of faith. The rule of faith, univerſally received and acknowledged by the Chriſtian church in all ages before the council of Trent, was the word of God, contained in the canonical books of holy ſcripture; which were therefore by the church called *canonical*, becauſe they were the rule of faith and manners, of the doctrines to be believed, and the duties to be practiſed by all Chriſtians. But when the errors and corruptions of the Romiſh church were grown to the height, and the Pope and his council at Trent were reſolved not to retrench and reform them, they ſaw it neceſſary to enlarge and lengthen out their rule; becauſe the ancient rule of the holy ſcriptures would by no means reach ſeveral of the doctrines and practices of that church, which they were reſolved to maintain and make good by one means or other: As, namely, the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, of purgatory, and of the ſeven ſacraments; and the practice of the worſhip of ſaints and images; of the ſcriptures and the ſervice of God in an unknown tongue; of indulgences, and the communion in one kind; and ſeveral other ſuperſtitious practices in uſe among them.

Now, to enlarge the rule to the beſt advantage for the juſtification of theſe doctrines and practices, they took theſe two ways.

Firſt, They have added to the canonical books of the Old Teſtament, which were received by the Jewiſh church, to whom were committed the oracles of God: I ſay, to theſe they have added ſeveral apocryphal books, not warranted by divine inſpiration, becauſe they were written after prophecy and divine inſpiration was ceaſed in the Jewiſh church, Malachi being the laſt of their prophets, according to the general tradition of that church. But becauſe the addition of theſe books did not make a rule of faith and practice large enough for their purpoſe; in imitation of the Jews, in the time of the greateſt confuſion and degeneracy of that church, they added, in the

Second

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Second place, to their books of ſcripture, which they call *the written word*, an *unwritten word*; which they call *oral tradition* from Chriſt and his Apoſtles; which they declare to be of equal authority with the holy ſcriptures themſelves; and that it ought to be received with the ſame pious veneration and affection. Of which traditions they being the keepers and judges, they may extend them to what they pleaſe; and, having them in their own breaſts, they may declare whatever they have a mind to, to have been a conſtant and univerſal tradition of their church; though it is evident to common ſenſe, that nothing can be more uncertain, and more liable to alteration and miſtake, than tradition, at the diſtance of ſo many ages, brought down by word of mouth, without writing, and paſſing through ſo many hands. He that can think theſe to be of equal certainty and authority with what is delivered by writing, and brought down by books, undertakes the defence of a ſtrange paradox, *viz.* That general rumour and report of things ſaid and done fifteen hundred years ago, is of equal authority and credit with a record, and a written hiſtory.

By which proceeding of the council of Trent, concerning the rule of faith and practice, it is very evident, that they had no mind to bring their faith to the ancient rule, the holy ſcriptures. That they knew could not be done; and therefore they were reſolved to fit their rule to their faith. And this foundation being laid in their firſt decree, all the reſt would afterwards go on very ſmoothly. For do but give men the making of their rule, and they can make good any thing by it. And accordingly, the council of Trent having thus fixed and fitted a rule to their own purpoſe, in the concluſion of that decree, they give the world fair warning, upon what grounds, and in what ways, they intend to proceed in their following decrees of practice and definitions of faith. *Omnes itaque intelligant, quo ordine & viâ ipſa ſynodus, poſt jactum fidei confeſſionis fundamentum, ſit progreſſura, &c.* "Be it known there-"fore to all men, in what order and way the ſynod, "after having laid this foundation of the confeſſion of "faith, will proceed; and what teſtimonies and proofs "ſhe chiefly intends to make uſe of, for the confirma-"tion

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" tion of doctrines, and reformation of manners in the " church." And, no doubt, all men do see very plainly to what purpose this foundation is laid of so large a rule of faith. And this being admitted, how easy is it for them to confirm and prove whatever doctrines and practices they have a mind to establish?

But if this be a new, and *another foundation*, than that which the great author and founder of our religion hath laid and built his church upon, *viz. the foundation of the prophets and apostles*, it is no matter what they build upon it. And if they go about to prove any thing by the new parts of this rule, by the apocryphal books, which they have added to the ancient canon of the scriptures, brought down to us by the general tradition of the Christian church, and by their pretended unwritten traditions; we do with reason reject this kind of proof, and desire them first to prove their rule, before they pretend to prove any thing by it: for we protest against this rule, as never declared and owned by the Christian church, nor proceeded upon by the ancient fathers of the church, nor by any council whatsoever before the council of Trent.

In vain then doth the church of Rome vaunt itself of the antiquity of their faith and religion, when the very foundation and rule of it is but of yesterday; a new thing never before known or heard of in the Christian world: whereas the foundation and rule of our religion is the word of God, contained in the holy scriptures; to which Christians in all ages have appealed, as the only rule of faith and life.

3. I proceed now to the third thing I proposed, *viz.* that we are to *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*, against all the temptations and terrors of the world. And this seems more especially and principally to be here intended by the Apostle in this exhortation.

I shall first speak of the temptations of the world. And they are chiefly these two; the temptation of fashion and example, and of worldly interest and advantage.

1*st*, Of fashion and example. This, in truth and reality, is no strong argument; and yet, in experience and effect, it is often found to be very powerful. It is frequently seen, that this hath many times too great an influence upon weak and foolish minds. Men are apt to

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to be carried down with the ſtream, and to follow a multitude in that which is evil: but more eſpecially men are prone to be ſwayed by great examples, and to bend themſelves to ſuch an obſequiouſneſs to their ſuperiors and betters, that, in compliance with them, they are ready not only to change their affection to perſons and things, as they do, but even their judgment alſo; and that in the greateſt and weightieſt matters, even in matters of religion, and the great concernments of another world. But this ſurely is an argument of a poor and mean ſpirit, and of a weak underſtanding, which leans upon the judgment of another; and is in truth the loweſt degree of ſervility that a reaſonable creature can ſtoop to; and even beneath that of a ſlave, who, in the midſt of his chains and fetters, doth ſtill retain the freedom of his mind and judgment.

But I need not to urge this upon conſiderate perſons, who know better how to value their duty and obligation to God, than to be tempted to do any thing contrary thereto, merely in compliance with faſhion and example. There are ſome things in religion ſo very plain, that a wiſe and good man would ſtand alone in the belief and practice of them, and not be moved in the leaſt by the contrary example of the whole world. It was a brave reſolution of Joſhua, though all men ſhould forſake the God of Iſrael, and run aſide to other gods, yet he would not do it, Joſh. xxiv. 15. *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve: but as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.* It was well reſolved of Peter, if he had not been too confident of his own ſtrength, when he ſaid to our Saviour, *Though all men forſake thee, yet will not I.*

2*dly*, Another ſort of temptation, and which is commonly more powerful than example, is worldly intereſt and advantage. This is a mighty bait to a great part of mankind, and apt to work very ſtrongly upon the neceſſities of ſome, and upon the covetouſneſs and ambition of others. Some men are tempted by neceſſity; which many times makes them do ugly and reproachful things, and, like Eſau, *for a morſel of meat, to ſell their birth-right and bleſſing.* Covetouſneſs tempts others to be of that religion which gives them the proſpect of the

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greatest earthly advantage, either for the increasing or securing of their estates. When they find, that they *cannot serve God and mammon*, they will *forsake the one, and cleave to the other*. This was one of the great temptations to many in the primitive times, and a frequent cause of apostasy from the faith; an eager desire of riches, and too great a value for them; as St. Paul observes, 1 Tim. vi. 9. 10. *But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred* (or been seduced) *from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*. This was the temptation which drew off Demas from his religion; as St. Paul tells us, 2 Tim. iv. 10. *Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.*

Ambition is likewise a great temptation to proud and aspiring minds, and makes many men false to their religion, when they find it a hinderance to their preferment: and they are easily persuaded, that that is the best religion which is attended with the greatest worldly advantages, and will raise them to the highest dignity. The devil understood very well the force of this temptation when he set upon our Saviour, and therefore reserved it for the last assault. *He shewed him all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them; and said to him, All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me*. And when he saw this would not prevail, he gave him over in despair, and left him. But though this be a very dazzling temptation; yet there are considerations of that weight to be set over-against it, from the nature of religion, and the infinite concernment of it to our immortal souls, as is sufficient *to quench this fiery dart of the devil*, and to put all the temptations of this world out of countenance, and to render all the riches and glory of it, in comparison of the eternal happiness and misery of the other world, but *as the very small dust upon the balance*. What temptation of this world can stand against that argument of our Saviour, if it be seriously weighed and considered, *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* If we would consider things impartially, and weigh them

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them in a juſt and equal balance; the things which concern our bodies, and this preſent life, are of no conſideration, in compariſon of the great and vaſt concernments of our immortal ſouls, and the happy or miſerable condition of our bodies and ſouls to all eternity.

And religion is a matter of this vaſt concernment; and therefore not to be bargained away, and parted with by us, for the greateſt things this world can offer. There is no greater ſign of a ſordid ſpirit, than to put a high value upon things of little worth; and no greater mark of folly, than to make an equal bargain, to part with things of greateſt price, for a ſlender and trifling conſideration: as if a man of great fortune and eſtate, ſhould ſell the inheritance of it for a picture, which, when he hath it, will not perhaps yield ſo much as will maintain him for one year. The folly is ſo much the greater in things of infinitely greater value; as for a man to quit God and religion, to ſell the truth, and his ſoul, and to part with his everlaſting inheritance, for a convenient ſervice, for a good cuſtomer, and ſome preſent advantage in his trade and profeſſion, or indeed for any condition which the fooliſh language of this world calls a high place, or a great preferment. The things which theſe men part with upon theſe cheap terms, God, and his truth, and religion, are, to thoſe who underſtand themſelves, and the juſt value of their immortal ſouls, things of ineſtimable worth, and not to be parted with by a conſiderate man, for any price this world can bid. And thoſe who are to be bought out of their religion upon ſuch low terms, and ſo eaſily parted from it, it is much to be feared, that they have little or no religion to *hold faſt*.

Secondly, As we are to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*, againſt the temptations and allurements of this world; ſo likewiſe againſt the terrors of it.

Fear is a paſſion of great force; and, if men be not very reſolute and conſtant, will be apt to ſtagger them, and to *move them from their ſtedfaſtneſs*: and therefore, when the caſe of ſuffering and perſecution for the truth happens, we had need to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith*. Our Saviour, in the parable of the ſower, tells

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us, that there were many *that heard the word, and with joy received it; but when perſecution and tribulation aroſe becauſe of the word, preſently they were offended.*

And though, bleſſed be God, this be not now our caſe; yet there was a time when it was the general caſe of Chriſtians, in the firſt beginning of Chriſtianity, and for ſeveral ages after, though with ſome intermiſſion and intervals of eaſe. It was then a general rule, and the common expectation of Chriſtians, That *through many tribulations they muſt enter into the kingdom of God*; and that if *any man will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, he muſt ſuffer perſecution.* And in ſeveral ages ſince thoſe primitive times, the ſincere profeſſors of religion have, in divers places, been expoſed to moſt grievous ſufferings and perſecutions for the truth. And even, at this day, in ſeveral places, the faithful ſervants of God are exerciſed with the ſharpeſt and ſoreſt trials that perhaps were ever heard of in any age; and for the ſake of God, and the conſtant profeſſion of his true religion, are *tormented and killed all the day long, and are accounted as ſheep for the ſlaughter.* It is their hard lot to be called to theſe cruel and bitter ſufferings, and our happy opportunity to be called upon for their relief; thoſe of them, I mean, that have eſcaped that terrible ſtorm and tempeſt, and have taken refuge and ſanctuary here among us, and, out of his Majeſty's great humanity and goodneſs, are, by his publick letters, recommended to the charity of the whole nation, by the name of *diſtreſſed Proteſtants.*

Let us conſider, how much eaſier our lot and our duty is, than theirs; as much as it is eaſier to compaſſionate the ſufferings, and to relieve the diſtreſſes of others, than to be ſuch ſufferers, and in ſuch diſtreſs ourſelves. Let us make their caſe our own, and then we ourſelves will be the beſt judges how it is fit for us to demean ourſelves towards them, and to what degree we ought to extend our charity and compaſſion to them. Let us put on their caſe and circumſtances, and ſuppoſe that we were the ſufferers, and had fled to them for refuge: the ſame pity and commiſeration, the ſame tender regard and conſideration of our ſad caſe, the ſame liberal and effectual relief that we ſhould deſire and expect, and be glad to have ſhewn and afforded to ourſelves, let us give to them;

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them; and then, I am ſure, they will want no fitting comfort and ſupport from us.

We enjoy, bleſſed be the goodneſs of God to us, great peace and plenty, and freedom from evil and ſuffering. And ſurely one of the beſt means to have theſe bleſſings continued to us, and our tranquillity prolonged, is, to conſider and relieve thoſe who want the bleſſings which we enjoy; and the readieſt way to provoke God to deprive us of thoſe bleſſings, is, to *ſhut up the bowels of our compaſſion from* our diſtreſſed *brethren*. God can eaſily change the ſcene, and make our ſufferings, if not in the ſame kind, yet in one kind or other, equal to theirs; and then we ſhall *remember the afflictions of Joſeph*, and ſay, as his brethren did, when they fell into trouble, *We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we ſaw the anguiſh of his ſoul when he beſought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this diſtreſs come upon us.*

God alone knows, what ſtorms the devil may yet raiſe in the world, before the end of it: and therefore it concerns all Chriſtians, in all times and places, who have taken upon them the profeſſion of Chriſt's religion, to conſider well beforehand, and to calculate the dangers and ſufferings it may expoſe them to, and to arm ourſelves with reſolution and patience againſt the fierceſt aſſaults of temptation; conſidering the ſhortneſs of all temporal afflictions and ſufferings, in compariſon of the eternal and glorious reward of them; and the lightneſs of them too, in compariſon of the endleſs and intolerable torments of another world; to which every man expoſeth himſelf, who forſakes God, and renounceth his truth, and wounds his conſcience, to avoid temporal ſufferings.

And though fear, in many caſes, eſpecially if it be of death and extreme ſufferings, be a great excuſe for ſeveral actions, becauſe it may *cadere in conſtantem virum*, "happen to a reſolute man;" yet in this caſe of renouncing our religion, (unleſs it be very ſudden and ſurpriſing, out of which a man recovers himſelf when he comes to himſelf, as St. Peter did; or the ſuffering be ſo extreme, as to put a man beſides himſelf for the time, ſo as to make him ſay or do any thing); I ſay, in this caſe

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caſe of renouncing God, and his truth, God will not admit fear for a juſt excuſe of our apoſtaſy; which, if it be unrepented of, (and the ſcripture ſpeaks of repentance in that caſe as very difficult), will be our ruin. And the reaſon is, becauſe God has given us ſuch fair warning of it, that we may be prepared for it in the reſolution of our minds: and we enter into religion upon theſe terms, with a profeſſed expectation of ſuffering, and a firm purpoſe to lay down our lives for the truth, if God ſhall call us to it. *If any man will be my diſciple*, (ſays our Lord), *let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow me.* And again, *He that loveth life itſelf more than me, is not worthy of me. And if any man be aſhamed of me, and of my words, in this unfaithful generation, of him will I be aſhamed before my Father, and the holy angels.*

And therefore, to maſter and ſubdue this fear, our Saviour hath propounded great objects of terror to us, and a danger infinitely more to be dreaded; which every man runs himſelf wilfully upon, who ſhall quit the profeſſion of his religion, to avoid temporal ſufferings: Luke xii. 4. 5. *Fear not them that kill the body, but after that have nothing that they can do. But I will tell you whom you ſhall fear: Fear him, who, after he hath killed, can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell; yea, I ſay unto you, Fear him.* And to this dreadful hazard every man expoſeth himſelf, who, for the fear of men, ventures thus to offend God. Theſe are *the fearful and unbelievers* ſpoken of by St. John, *who ſhall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond death.*

Thus you ſee how we are to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*, againſt all temptations and terrors of this world. I ſhould now have proceeded to the next particular, namely, that we are to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith*, againſt all vain promiſes of being put into a ſafer condition, and groundleſs hopes of getting to heaven upon eaſier terms, in ſome other church and religion. But this I ſhall not now enter upon.

SERMON

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SERMON LXI.

Of constancy in the profession of the true religion.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.

The fourth sermon on this text.

IN these words, I have told you, are contained these two parts.

1. An exhortation to *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.*

2. An argument or encouragement thereto: *Because he is faithful that promised.* I am yet upon the

First of these, the exhortation to Christians to be constant and steddy in the profession of their religion: *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* And that we might the better comprehend the true and full meaning of this exhortation, I shewed,

First, Negatively, what is not meant and intended by it; and I mentioned these two particulars.

1. The Apostle doth not hereby intend, that those who are capable of inquiring into and examining the grounds and reasons of their religion, should not have the liberty to do it. Nor,

2. That when, upon due inquiry and examination, men are settled, as they think and verily believe, in the true faith and religion, they should obstinately refuse to hear any reason that can be offered against their present persuasion: for reason, when it is fairly offered, is always to be heard. I proceeded, in the

Second place, positively, to explain the meaning of this exhortation. And to this purpose I proposed to consider,

I. What it is that we are to hold fast, *viz. the confession* or *profession of our faith*; the ancient Christian faith, which

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which every Christian makes profession of in his baptism: not the doubtful and uncertain traditions of men, nor the imperious dictates and doctrines of any church (which are not contained in the holy scriptures) imposed upon the Christian world, though with never so confident a pretence of the antiquity of the doctrines, or of the infallibility of the proposers of them. And then I proceeded, in the

II. Second place, to shew, How we are to *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;* and I mentioned these following particulars, as probably implied and comprehended in the Apostle's exhortation.

1. That we should *hold fast the profession of our faith* against the confidence of men, without scripture or reason to support that confidence.

2. And much more against the confidence of men, contrary to plain scripture and reason, and the common sense of mankind. Under both which heads I gave several instances of doctrines and practices imposed with great confidence upon the world, some without, and others plainly against scripture and reason, and the common sense of mankind.

3. Against all the temptations and terrors of the world; the temptations of fashion and example, and of worldly interest and advantage; and against the terrors of persecution and suffering for the truth. Thus far I have gone. I shall now proceed to the two other particulars, which remain to be spoken to.

4. We are to *hold fast the profession of our faith*, against all vain promises of being put into a safer condition, and groundless hopes of getting to heaven upon easier terms, in some other church and religion. God hath plainly declared to us in the holy scriptures, upon what terms and conditions we may obtain eternal life and happiness, and what will certainly exclude us from it; that *except we repent, (i.e.* without true contrition for our sins, and forsaking of them), *we shall perish;* that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord;* that *no fornicator, or adulterer, or idolater, or covetous person*, nor any one that lives in the practice of such sins, *shall have any inheritance in the kingdom of God or Christ.* There is as great and unpassable a gulf fixed between heaven and a wicked

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wicked man, as there is betwixt heaven and hell. And when men have done all they can to debauch and corrupt the Chriſtian doctrine, it is impoſſible to reconcile a wicked life with any reaſonable and well-grounded hopes of happineſs in another world. No church hath that privilege to ſave a man upon any other terms, than thoſe which our bleſſed Saviour hath declared in his holy goſpel. All religions are equal in this, that a bad man can be ſaved in none of them.

The church of Rome pretends their church and religion to be the only ſafe and ſure way to ſalvation; and yet, if their doctrine be true concerning the intention of the prieſt, (and if it be not, they are much to blame in making it an article of their faith); I ſay, if it be true, that the intention of the prieſt is neceſſary to the validity and virtue of the ſacraments, then there is no religion in the world that runs the ſalvation of men upon more and greater hazards and uncertainties, and ſuch as by no care and diligence of man, in *working out his own ſalvation*, are to be avoided and prevented.

As for the eaſier terms of ſalvation which they offer to men, they ſignify nothing, if they be not able to make them good; which no man can reaſonably believe they can do that hath read the Bible, and doth in any good meaſure underſtand the nature of God, and the deſign of religion. For inſtance: That after a long courſe of a moſt lewd and flagitious life, a man may be reconciled to God, and have his ſins forgiven at the laſt gaſp, upon confeſſion of them to the prieſt, with that imperfect degree of contrition for them, which they call *attrition*, together with the abſolution of the prieſt.

Now, attrition is a trouble for ſin, merely for fear of the puniſhment of it. And this, together with confeſſion, and the abſolution of the prieſt, without any hatred of ſin for the evil and contrariety of it to the holy nature and law of God, and without the leaſt ſpark of love to God, will do the ſinner's buſineſs, and put him into a ſtate of grace and ſalvation, without any other grace or diſpoſition for ſalvation, but only the fear of hell and damnation. This, I confeſs, is eaſy; but the great difficulty is to believe it to be true. And certainly, no man that ever ſeriouſly conſidered the nature of God

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God and religion, can ever be persuaded to build the hopes of his salvation upon such a quick-sand. The absolution of all the priests in the world will not procure the forgiveness of God for any man that is not disposed for his mercy by such a repentance as the gospel requires; which, I am sure, is very different from that which is required by the council of Trent.

They that offer heaven to men upon so very large and loose terms, give great cause to suspect, that they will never make good their offer; the terms are so unreasonably cheap and easy, that there must be some fraud and false dealing. And, on the other hand, nothing ought to recommend our religion more to a wise and considerate man, than that the terms of salvation which we propose to men, *viz.* faith, and repentance, and a sincere obedience to the precepts of the gospel, manifested in the tenor of a holy and virtuous life, are not only perfectly agreeable to the plain and constant declaration of holy scripture, but do likewise naturally tend to engage men most effectually to a good life, and thereby to make them *meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* And therefore every body ought to be afraid of a religion which makes such lavish offers of salvation, and to take heed how he ventures his soul upon them. For if, after all the hopes that are given of salvation upon such and such terms, the sinner doth really miscarry and miss of heaven; it is but very ill comfort to him to be put into a fool's paradise for a minute or two before he leaves the world, and the next moment after to find himself *in the place of torment.* I proceed to the

5. Fifth and last particular I mentioned, as implied in the exhortation here in the text, *viz.* That we should *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*, against all the cunning arts and insinuations of busy and disputing men, whose design it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to gain proselytes to their party and faction. To this purpose there are several cautions given by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, Matth. xxiv. 4. 5. *Take heed, that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, and shall deceive many.* Eph. iv. 14. *That ye henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about*

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about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſleight of men, ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ, (the word ſignifies the cunning of gameſters at dice), *by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs whereby they lie in wait to deceive;* and chap. v. 6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words.* Col. ii. 8. *Beware leſt any man ſpoil you through philoſophy and vain deceit;* that is, by ſophiſtry and vain reaſoning, under a pretence of philoſophy. Heb. xiii. 9. *Be not carried about with divers and ſtrange doctrines.* 2 Pet. iii. 17. *Beware leſt ye alſo being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs.* And this caution is inforced by an expreſs prediction of a great apoſtaſy, which ſhould happen in the Chriſtian church, by which many ſhould be ſeduced, by pretence of miracles, and by ſeveral arts of deceit and falſhood. This apoſtaſy St. Paul expreſsly foretels, 2 Theſſ. ii. 1. 2. 3. *We beſeech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye be not ſoon ſhaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by ſpirit,* (that is, by pretence to inſpiration), *nor by word,* (or meſſage), *nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Chriſt is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day ſhall not come, except there come a falling away firſt, and that man of ſin be revealed, the ſon of perdition.* And, after a particular deſcription of him, he adds, ver. 9. 10. *Whoſe coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and ſigns, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs, in them that periſh.* From all which he concludes, ver. 15. *Therefore, brethren, ſtand faſt.*

The particular nature and kind of this apoſtaſy the ſame Apoſtle deſcribes more fully, 1 Tim. iv. 1. 2. 3. *Now the Spirit ſpeaketh expreſsly, that in the latter times ſome ſhall apoſtatize from the faith, giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits, and doctrines of devils; ſpeaking lies in hypocriſy,* (*i. e.* under a great pretence of ſanctity, ſpreading their pernicious errors); *forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtain from meats.* This is a very lively and pat deſcription of that great apoſtaſy in the Chriſtian church, which began in the Weſtern part of it, and hath ſpread itſelf far and wide. For there the ſpirit of error and falſhood has prevailed, under an hypocritical pre-

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tence of their being the only true church and true Chriſtians in the world. There marriage, and ſeveral ſorts of meats, are forbidden to ſeveral ranks and orders of men. All the difficulty is, what is here meant by *doctrines of devils*: and theſe certainly can be no other than doctrines tending to idolatry; which the ſcripture every where doth in a particular manner aſcribe to the devil, as the inventer and great promoter of it. And this is very much confirmed by what we find added in ſome ancient Greek copies in this text, which runs thus: *In the latter times ſome ſhall apoſtatize from the faith; for they ſhall worſhip the dead, as ſome alſo in Iſrael worſhipped:* and then it follows, *giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits, and doctrines of devils.* So that the particular kind of idolatry into which ſome part of the Chriſtian church ſhould apoſtatize, is here pointed at; that they ſhould worſhip ſouls departed, or the ſpirits of dead men; which was part of the Heathen idolatry, into which the people of Iſrael did frequently relapſe. So that the Spirit of God doth here foretel ſuch an apoſtaſy in ſome part of the Chriſtian church, as the people of Iſrael were guilty of, in falling into the Heathen idolatry: *They ſhall be worſhippers of the dead, as the Iſraelites alſo were.*

And this is the great and dangerous ſeduction which the Chriſtians are ſo much cautioned againſt in the New Teſtament, and charged to *hold faſt the profeſſion of the faith* againſt the cunning arts and inſinuations of ſeducing ſpirits: not but (as I ſaid before) that we are always to have an ear open to reaſon, and to be ready to hearken and to yield to that, whenever it is fairly propoſed; but to be over-reached and rooked out of one's religion, by little ſophiſtical arts and tricks, is childiſh and ſilly. After we are, upon due trial and examination of the grounds of our religion, ſettled and eſtabliſhed in it, we ought not to ſuffer ourſelves to be removed from it, by the groundleſs pretences of confident people to infallibility, and to be practiſed upon by cunning men, who lie at catch to make proſelytes to their party. This is to be *like children, toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.*

And we ought to be the more careful of ourſelves, becauſe there never was any time wherein ſeducing ſpirits

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rits were more bold and buſy to pervert men from the truth. Againſt theſe we ſhould hold faſt our religion, as a man would do his money in a crowd. It paſſeth in the world for a great mark of folly, when a man and his money are ſoon parted: but it is a ſign of much greater folly, for a man eaſily to quit his religion; eſpecially to be caught by ſome ſuch groſs methods, as the ſeducers I am ſpeaking of commonly uſe, and which lie ſo very open to ſuſpicion; ſuch as ill-deſigning men are wont to practiſe upon a young heir, when they have inſinuated themſelves into his company, to make a prey of him. They charge him to tell no body in what company he hath been; nor to aſk the counſel and advice of his friends concerning what they have been perſuading him to; becauſe they, for their own intereſt, will be ſure to diſſuade him from it. Juſt thus do theſe ſeducers practiſe upon weak people. They charge them not to acquaint their miniſter, with whom they have been, nor what diſcourſe they have had about religion, nor what books have been put into their hands; becauſe then all their kind deſign and intention towards them will be defeated. But, above all, they muſt be ſure to read no books on the other ſide; becauſe they are no competent judges of points of faith, and this reading on both ſides will rather confound than clear their underſtandings. They tell them, that they have ſtated the matter truly, and would not for all the world deceive them; and they may eaſily perceive, by their earneſt application to them, that nothing but charity, and a paſſionate deſire of the ſalvation of their ſouls, makes them take all theſe pains with them. But this is ſo groſs a way of proceeding, that any man of common underſtanding muſt needs diſcern by this kind treatment, that theſe men can have no honeſt deſign upon them.

To come then to a more particular conſideration of the arts and methods which they uſe (I mean particularly thoſe of the church of Rome) in making proſelytes to their religion. As,

1. In allowing them to be very competent and ſufficient judges for themſelves in the choice of their church and religion, (that is, which is the true church and religion, in which alone ſalvation is to be had); and yet telling

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ling them, at the same time, that they are utterly incapable of judging of particular doctrines, and points of faith and practice; but for these they must rely upon the judgment of an infallible church, when they are in it; otherwise they will certainly run into damnable errors and mistakes about these things.

And they must of necessity allow them to be sufficient judges for themselves in the choice of their religion; as will be evident, by considering in what method they proceed with their intended proselyte.

They propose to him to change his church and his religion, because he is in the wrong; and they will shew him a better, and such a one as is the only true one, and in which alone salvation is to be had. To persuade him hereto, they offer him some reasons and arguments, or give him books to read, containing arguments to move him to make this change; to satisfy him of the reasonableness, and to convince him of the necessity of it.

Now, by this way of proceeding, and they can take no other, they do, whether they will or no, make the person whom they are endeavouring to convert, a judge for himself which church and religion is best; that which they would have him embrace and come over to, or that which they would persuade him to forsake. For to what end else do they offer him reasons and arguments to persuade him to leave our church, and to come over to theirs, but that he may consider the force and weight of them; and having considered them, may judge whether they be of force sufficient to over-rule him to make this change? So that, as unwilling as they are to make particular persons judge for themselves about points of faith, and about the sense of scripture confirming those points, (because this is to leave every man to his own private spirit, and fancy, and giddy brain); yet they are compelled by necessity, and against their own principles, to allow a man, in this case of chusing his religion, to be a judge of the reasons and arguments which they offer to induce him thereto. So that, whether they will or no, they must permit him to be a judge for himself for this once: but not to make a practice of it, or to pretend this privilege ever after; for in acknowledgment of this great favour, of being permitted to judge for himself this

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this once, (which they do unwillingly grant him, and upon mere neceſſity), he is for ever after to reſign up his judgment to the church. And though this liberty be allowed *pro hac vice*, and properly to ſerve a turn, *i. e.* in order to the changing of his religion; yet he is to underſtand, that he is no fit and competent judge of particular points of faith: theſe he muſt all learn from the true church when he is in it, and take them upon her authority: and in ſo doing he ſhall do very prudently; becauſe ſhe is infallible, and cannot be deceived, but he may.

But is there any ſenſe in all this, that a man ſhould be very fit and able to judge of that which they eſteem the main and fundamental point of all, namely, which is the true church and religion; and of the reaſons and arguments whereby they pretend to demonſtrate it, and of the true meaning of thoſe texts of ſcripture whereby they pretend to prove theirs to be the only true church; and yet ſhould be wholly unable to judge of particular points of faith, or of the true ſenſe of any texts of ſcripture that can be produced for the proof of thoſe points?

Is it ſo very prudent, in all the particular points of faith, for a man to rely upon the judgment of the church, becauſe ſhe is infallible; and not to truſt his own judgment about them, becauſe he is fallible, and may be deceived? And is it prudent likewiſe for this man to truſt his own judgment in the main buſineſs of all, namely, which is the true church and religion; concerning which he is as fallible in his judgment, and as liable to be deceived, as in the particular points? And if he be miſtaken in the main point, they muſt grant his miſtake to be fatal; becauſe his ſincerity as to all the reſt depends upon it. This is a great myſtery and riddle, that every particular man ſhould have ſo ſufficient a judgment as to this main and fundamental buſineſs, which is the true church and religion? and ſhould have no judgment at all about particular points fit to be truſted and relied upon: as if there were a certain judgment and prudence *quoad hoc*; and as if all mens underſtandings were ſo framed, as to be very judicious and diſcerning in this main point of religion, but to be weak, and dangerous, and blind, as to all particular points: or as if a man might have a

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very good judgment, and be fit to be trusted and relied upon, before he come into their church; but from the very moment he enters into it, his judgment were quite lost, and good for nothing: for this in effect, and by interpretation, they say, when they allow a man to be very able to judge which is the true church and religion; but so soon as he hath discovered and embraced that, to have no judgment of his own afterwards of any point of religion whatsoever: and a very tempting argument it is to any man that hath judgment, to enter into that church.

2. Another art they use with their intended proselyte, in order to his making a right choice of his religion, is, to caution him to hear and read only the arguments and books which are on one side. But now, admitting their designed proselyte to be just such a judge, and so far they will allow him to be, and no farther, *viz.* which is the true church? but to have no fitness and ability at all to judge of particular points of faith: yet methinks they put a very odd condition and untoward restraint upon this judge, in telling him, (as they certainly use to do those whom they would pervert), that he must have no discourse, nor read any books, but only on that side which they would gain him to; because that is the way to perplex and confound him, so that he shall never be able to come to a clear judgment and resolution in the matter. But will any man admit this way of proceeding in a temporal case? This is just as if in a cause of the greatest consequence, the counsel on one side should go about to persuade the judge, that it is only fit to hear what he hath to say in the case; that he will open it very plainly, and state the matter in difference so clearly and impartially, and bring such strong reasons and proofs for what he says, that he shall not need to hear any thing on the other side, but may proceed to judgment without any more ado: but if, when the matter is thus laid before him so plainly, and is even ripe for judgment, he will trouble himself needlessly to hear the other side; this will cast them back where they first began, and bring the matter to an endless wrangling, and so confound and puzzle his understanding, that he shall never be able to pass any clear judgment in the cause.

What, think we, would a judge say to such a bold and

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and senseless pleader? The case is the same, and the absurdity every whit as gross and palpable, in pressing any man to make a judgment in a matter which infinitely more concerns him, upon hearing only the reasons and arguments on one side.

3. Another art which they use in making proselytes, is, to possess them, that there is but one thing that they are mainly concerned to inquire into; and that is this: Since there is but one true catholick church of Christ upon earth, out of which there is no salvation to be had, which that true church is? and when they have found that out, that will teach them in a most infallible way the true faith and religion, and all things that are necessary to be believed or done by them in order to their salvation; so that they have nothing to do, but to satisfy themselves in this single inquiry, Which is the true catholick church of Christ? This is the *unum necessarium*, "the one thing necessary:" and when they have found out this, and are satisfied about it, they need to inquire no farther; this church will fully instruct and satisfy them in all other things. And this I cannot deny to be a very artificial way of proceeding, and to serve their purpose very well; for they have these two great advantages by it.

1st, That it makes the work short, and saves them a great deal of labour, by bringing the whole business to one single inquiry: and when they have gained this point, that this single question is all that they need to be satisfied in; then they have nothing to do, but to ply and puzzle the man with their motives of credibility, and marks of the true church; and to shew, as well as they can, how these marks agree to their church, and are all to be found in it, and in no other; and to set out to the best advantage the glorious privileges of their church, the miraculous things that have been, and are still daily done in it, and the innumerable multitude of their saints and martyrs: and if these general things take and sink into them, their work is in effect done.

2dly, Another great advantage they have by it, is, that, by bringing them to this method, they divert and keep them off from the many objections against their church and religion, namely, the errors and corruptions which

which we charge them withal. For this is the thing they are afraid of, and will by no means be brought to, to vindicate and make good their innovations in faith and practice, ſo plainly in many things contrary to ſcripture, and to the faith and practice of the primitive church: As, the doctrines of tranſubſtantiation, of purgatory, the Pope's ſupremacy, of the infallibility of their church, of their ſeven ſacraments inſtituted by Chriſt, and of the intention of the prieſt being neceſſary to the validity and virtue of the ſacraments: And then ſeveral of their practices; as, of the worſhip of images, of the invocation of angels and ſaints, of the ſervice of God and the ſcriptures in an unknown tongue, and the communion in one kind; and ſeveral other things, ſo plainly contrary to the ſcriptures, and the practice and uſage of the primitive church, that almoſt the meaneſt capacity may eaſily be made ſenſible and convinced of it. Theſe are ſore places, which they deſire not to have touched, and therefore they uſe all poſſible artifice to keep men at a diſtance from them; partly, becauſe the particular diſcuſſion of them is tedious, and it requires more than ordinary ſkill to ſay any thing that is tenible for them, and ſo to paint and varniſh them over, as to hide the corruptions and deformities of them; but chiefly, becauſe they are conſcious to themſelves, that as in all theſe points they are upon the defenſive, ſo they are alſo upon very great diſadvantages; and therefore to avoid, if it be poſſible, being troubled with them, they have deviſed this ſhorter, and eaſier, and more convenient way of making proſelytes.

Not that they are always able to keep themſelves thus within their trenches, but are ſometimes, whether they will or no, drawn out to encounter ſome of theſe objections; but they rid themſelves of them as ſoon and as dexterouſly as they can, by telling thoſe that make them, that they will hereafter give them full ſatisfaction to all theſe matters, when they are gotten over the firſt and main inquiry, Which is the true church? For if they can keep them to this point, and gain them to it, they can deal with them more eaſily in the reſt: for when they can once ſwallow this principle, That the church of Rome is the one true catholick church, and conſequently, as they

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they have told them all along, infallible; this infallibility of the church once entertained, will cover a multitude of particular errors and mistakes; and will very much help to cure the weakness and defects of some particular doctrines and practices, and at last to silence and over-rule all objections against them. So that the benefit and advantage of this method is visibly and at first sight very great; and therefore no wonder they are so steddy and constant to it, and do so obstinately insist upon it. But how convenient soever it be to them, it is, I am sure, very unreasonable in itself; and that upon these accounts.

1*st*, Because the true church doth not constitute and make the true Christian faith and doctrine, but it is the true Christian faith and doctrine, the profession whereof makes the true church; and therefore, in reason, and order of nature, the first inquiry must be, What is the true faith and doctrine of Christ, which by him was delivered to the Apostles, and by them published and made known to the world, and by their writings transmitted and conveyed down to us? and this being found, every society of Christians which holds this doctrine, is a true part of the catholick church; and all the Christians throughout the world that agree in this doctrine, are the one true catholick church.

2*dly*, The inquiry about the true church can have no issue, even according to their own way of proceeding, without a due examination of the particular doctrines and practices of that church, the communion whereof they would persuade a man to embrace. We will admit at present this to be the first inquiry, Which is the true church? Let us now see in what way they manage this, to gain men over to their church. They tell them, that the church of Rome is the one true catholick church of Christ. The truth of this assertion we will particularly examine afterwards, when we come to consider the next step of their method in dealing with their converts. At present I shall only take notice in the general, what way they take to prove this assertion, namely, That the church of Rome is the one true catholick church; and that is, by the notes and marks of the true church, which they call their motives of credibility; because by these they design

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deſign to perſuade them, that the church of Rome is the one true catholick church. I ſhall not now reckon up all the notes and marks which they give of the true church; but only obſerve, that one of their principal marks of the true church is this, that the faith and doctrine of it be agreeable to the doctrine of the primitive and apoſtolick church, *i. e.* to the doctrine delivered by our Saviour and his Apoſtles. And this Bellarmine makes one of the marks of the true church. And they muſt unavoidably make it ſo; becauſe the true faith and doctrine of Chriſt is that which indeed conſtitutes the true church. But if this be an eſſential mark of the true church, then no man can poſſibly know the church of Rome to be the true church, till he have examined the particular doctrines and practices of it, and the agreement of them with the primitive doctrine and practice of Chriſtianity: and this neceſſarily draws on and engages them in a diſpute of the particular points and differences betwixt us; which is the very thing they would avoid by this method; and which I have now plainly ſhewed they cannot do, becauſe they cannot poſſibly prove their church to be the true church, without ſhewing the conformity of their doctrines and practices to the doctrine and practice of the primitive and apoſtolick church: and this will give them work enough, and will, whether they will or no, draw them out of their hold and faſtneſs; which is to amuſe people with a general inquiry, Which is the true church? without deſcending to the examination of their particular doctrines and practices. But this they muſt of neceſſity come to, before they can prove, by the notes and marks of the true church, that theirs is the true church.

And this is a demonſtration, that their method of ſatisfaction, as it is unnatural and unreaſonable, ſo it cannot ſerve the purpoſe they aim at by it; which is, to divert men from the examination of the particular points in difference between the church of Rome and us, and to gain them over to them by a wile and trick; becauſe the very method they take to prove themſelves to be the true catholick church, will inforce them to juſtify all their particular doctrines and practices, before they can finiſh this proof.

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And here we fix our foot, that the ſingle queſtion and point upon which they would put the whole iſſue of the matter, cannot poſſibly be brought to any reaſonable iſſue, without a particular diſcuſſion and examination of the points in difference betwixt their church and ours. And when they can make out theſe to be agreeable to the primitive doctrine and practice of the Chriſtian church, we have reaſon to be ſatisfied, that the church of Rome is a church in the communion whereof a man may be ſafe. But till that be made out, they have done nothing to perſuade any man that underſtands himſelf, that it is ſafe, much leſs neceſſary, to be of their communion. But if particular points muſt be diſcuſſed and cleared, before a man can be ſatisfied in the inquiry after the true church; then they muſt allow their intended convert to be a judge likewiſe of particular points; and if he be ſufficient for that too, before he comes into their church, I do not ſee of what uſe the infallibility of the church will be to him, when he is in it.

SERMON LXII.

Of conſtancy in the profeſſion of the true religion.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

The fifth ſermon on this text.

I Have already made a conſiderable progreſs in my diſcourſe upon theſe words; in which I told you there is an exhortation to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering;* and an argument or encouragement thereto, *Becauſe he is faithful that promiſed.* I am yet upon the firſt of theſe, the exhortation to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering.* By which, I told you, the Apoſtle doth not intend, that thoſe who are capable of examining

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amining the grounds and reasons of their religion, should not have the liberty to do it; nor that when, upon due inquiry, they are, as they verily believe, established in the true faith and religion, they should obstinately refuse to hear any reason that is fairly offered against their present persuasion.

And then I proceeded to shew positively,

I. What it is that we are exhorted to *hold fast, viz. the confession,* or *profession of our faith;* the ancient Christian faith, of which every Christian makes profession in his baptism: for it is of that the Apostle here speaks; as appears plainly by the context.

II. How we are to *hold fast the profession of our faith.* And of this I gave account in these following particulars.

1. We should *hold fast the profession of our faith,* against the confidence of men, without scripture or reason to support that confidence.

2. And much more against the confidence of men, contrary to plain scripture and reason, and the common sense of mankind; of which I gave you particular instances.

3. Against all the temptations and terrors of the world.

4. Against all vain promises of being put into a safer condition, and groundless hopes of getting to heaven upon easier terms, in some other church and religion. I am now upon the

5. Fifth and last particular I mentioned, namely, that we are to *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,* against all the cunning arts and insinuations of busy and disputing men, whose design it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to make proselytes to their party and faction. I have already mentioned some of the arts which they use (I mean particularly them of the church of Rome) in making proselytes to their religion; and I have shewn the absurdity and unreasonableness of them. As,

1. In allowing men to be very competent and sufficient judges for themselves in the choice of their religion, (*i. e.* which is the true church and religion, in which alone salvation is to be had?); and yet telling them, at the same time, that they are utterly incapable of judging of particular doctrines and points of faith. As for these,

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theſe, they muſt rely upon the judgment of an infallible church; and if they do not, they will certainly run into damnable errors and miſtakes.

And they muſt of neceſſity allow them the firſt, a ſufficient ability to judge for themſelves in the choice of their religion: otherwiſe in vain do they offer them arguments to perſuade them to theirs, if they cannot judge of the force of them. But now, after this, to deny them all ability to judge of particular doctrines and points of faith, is a very abſurd and inconſiſtent pretence.

2. Another art they uſe, in order to their making a right choice of their religion, is, earneſtly to perſuade them to hear and read only the arguments and books on their ſide: which is juſt as if one ſhould go about to perſuade a judge, in order to the better underſtanding and clearer deciſion of a cauſe, to hear only the counſel on one ſide.

3. They tell them, that the only thing they are to inquire into is, Which is the true church, the one catholick church mentioned in the creed, out of which there is no ſalvation? and when they have found that, they are to rely upon the authority of that church, which is infallible, for all other things. And this method they wiſely take, to avoid particular diſputes about the innovations and errors which we charge them withal. But I have ſhewn at large, that this cannot be the firſt inquiry; becauſe it is not the true church that makes the true Chriſtian faith and doctrine; but the profeſſion of the true Chriſtian faith and doctrine which makes the true church.

Beſides, their way of proving their church to be the only true church, being by the marks and properties of the true church, of which the chief is, the conformity of their doctrines and practices with the primitive and apoſtolical church; this unavoidably draws on an examination of their particular doctrines and practices, whether they be conformable to thoſe of the primitive and apoſtolical church? before their great inquiry, "Which "is the true church?" can be brought to an iſſue; which, it is plain, it can never be, without entering into the ocean of particular diſputes, which they deſire above all things to avoid. So that they are never the nearer by this method: they can neither ſhorten their work by it,

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nor keep off the examination of their particular errors and corruptions; which are a very sore place, and they cannot endure we should touch it.

I shall now proceed to discover some other arts and methods which they use in seducing people to their church and religion, and shall be as brief in them as I can.

4. They pretend, that the Roman church is the catholick church, *i. e.* the visible society of all Christians, united to the Bishop of Rome, as the supreme pastor and visible head of Christ's church upon earth: from whence it clearly follows, that it is necessary to all Christians to join themselves to the communion of the Roman church; otherwise they cannot be members of the catholick church of Christ, out of which there is no salvation.

We grant the consequence, that if the Roman church be the catholick church, it is necessary to be of that communion; because out of the catholick church there is ordinarily no salvation to be had. But how do they prove, that the Roman church is the catholick church? They would fain have us so civil, as to take this for granted; because if we do not, they do not well know how to go about to prove it. And indeed some things are obstinate, and will not be proved without so much trouble and difficulty, that it is better to let them alone; and, by the confident assertion of them, by importunity, and by any other fair means, to get them believed, without proof of this stubborn sort of propositions, which will admit of no proof. This is one, That a part is the whole; or, which is all one, That the Roman church is the catholick church. For that it is but a part of the Christian church, and not the best part neither, but perhaps the very worst and most corrupt of all the rest, is no difficult matter to prove, and hath been often done. But now to prove the church of Rome to be the catholick church, that is, the whole society of all true Christians in the world, these following particulars ought to be clearly shewn and made out.

1*st*, A plain constitution of our Saviour, whereby St. Peter, and his successors at Rome, are made the supreme head and pastors of the whole Christian church. For St. Peter first: Can they shew any such constitution in

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in the goſpel, or can they produce the leaſt proof and evidence out of the hiſtory of the Acts and the epiſtles of the Apoſtles, that St. Peter was acknowledged for ſuch by the reſt of the Apoſtles? Nay, is there not clear evidence there to the contrary; that, in the firſt council of the Chriſtian church at Jeruſalem, St. James, the Biſhop of Jeruſalem, was, if not ſuperior, at leaſt equal to him? Does St. Paul acknowledge any ſuperiority of St. Peter over him? Nay, does he not, upon ſeveral occaſions, declare himſelf equal to the chiefeſt Apoſtles, even to St. Peter himſelf? And is this conſiſtent with a plain conſtitution of our Lord's making St. Peter ſupreme head and paſtor of the Chriſtian church?

But ſuppoſe this to have been ſo, where doth it appear, by any conſtitution of our Saviour, that this authority was derived to his ſucceſſors? And if it were, why to his ſucceſſors at Rome, rather than at Antioch, where he was firſt and unqueſtionably Biſhop? They muſt acknowledge, that when he was Biſhop of Antioch, he was the ſupreme head and paſtor of the whole Chriſtian church; and then the ſtyle muſt have been, *the Antiochian Catholick church*, as it is now the *Roman Catholick*. But do they find any footſteps of ſuch a ſtyle in eccleſiaſtical hiſtory?

2*dly*, To make good this propoſition, That the Roman church is the catholick church, they are, in conſequence, obliged to affirm and believe, that the churches of Aſia, which were excommunicated by the Biſhops of Rome, for not keeping Eaſter as they did, and the churches of Aſia and Africa, which were excommunicated by the ſame Biſhop, upon the point of rebaptizing hereticks; that all theſe, by being turned out of the communion of the Roman church, were alſo cut off from the catholick church, and from a poſſibility of ſalvation. This the church of Rome themſelves will not affirm; and yet, if to be caſt out of the communion of the Roman, and the catholick church, be all one, they muſt affirm it.

3*dly*, In conſequence of this propoſition, That the church of Rome is the catholick church, they ought to hold, that all baptiſm out of the communion of their church is void, and of none effect. For if it be good, then it makes the perſons baptized members of the ca-

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tholick church; and then thoſe that are out of the communion of the Roman church, may be true members of the catholick church; and then the Roman and the catholick church are not all one. But the church of Rome holds the baptiſm of hereticks, and of thoſe that are out of the communion of their church, to be good; which is a demonſtration, that the Roman church neither is the catholick church, nor, if ſhe believe conſiſtently, can ſhe think herſelf to be ſo.

4*thly*, In conſequence of this propoſition, all the Chriſtians in the world which do not yield ſubjection to the Biſhop of Rome, and acknowledge his ſupremacy, are no true parts of the catholick church, nor in a poſſibility of ſalvation. And this does not only exclude thoſe of the reformed religion from being members of the catholick church, but the Greeks, and the Eaſtern churches, *i. e.* four of the five Patriarchal churches of the Chriſtian world; which taken together, are really greater than thoſe in communion with the church of Rome. And this the church of Rome does affirm concerning all thoſe churches and Chriſtians which refuſe ſubjection to the Biſhop of Rome, that they are out of the communion of the catholick church, and a capacity of ſalvation. But ſurely it is not poſſible, that the true catholick church of Chriſt can have ſo little charity as this comes to: and to a wiſe man there needs no other demonſtration than this, that the church of Rome is ſo far from being the whole Chriſtian church, that it is a very arrogant and uncharitable part of it.

5*thly*, and laſtly, In conſequence of the truth of this propoſition, and of the importance of it to the ſalvation of ſouls, and to the peace and unity of the Chriſtian church, they ought to produce expreſs mention of the Roman Catholick church, in the ancient creeds of the Chriſtian church. For if this propoſition, That the Roman church is the catholick, be true, it was always ſo, and always of the greateſt importance to the ſalvation of men, and the peace and unity of the Chriſtian church: and if it were ſo, and always believed to be ſo by the Chriſtian church, as they pretend, what reaſon can be imagined, why the ancient Chriſtian church ſhould never ſay ſo, nor put an article of ſuch conſequence and importance

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ance in expreſs words in their creeds; nor why they ſhould not have uſed the ſtyle of *Roman Catholick* as familiarly then, as they do now in the Roman church? A plain evidence that this is a new ſtyle which they uſe, when they give themſelves the title of *the Roman Catholick church*; and that the ancient Chriſtian church knew better, than to call one part of the catholick church the whole. I am ſure, that Æneas Sylvius, who was afterwards Pope Pius II. ſays, that, before the council of Nice, little reſpect was had to the Roman church. But how does this conſiſt with their preſent pretence, that the Roman church is, and always hath been the catholick church; and that the Biſhop of Rome is, by Chriſt's appointment, the ſupreme paſtor and viſible head of the whole Chriſtian church? Is it poſſible that this ſhould be believed in the Chriſtian church before the council of Nice, and yet little reſpect to be had at that time to the Roman church? This indeed was ſaid by Æneas Sylvius before he ſat in the infallible chair; but is never the leſs true for that.

5. The next ſtep of their method is, That the Roman church is infallible: and by this means they have a certain remedy againſt hereſy, and a judge of controverſies from which there is no appeal, which we want in our church. And this is a glorious privilege indeed, if they could prove that they had it, and that it would be ſo certain a remedy againſt hereſy, and give a final deciſion to all controverſies. But there is not one tittle of all this of which they are able to give any tenible proof. For,

1*ſt*, All the pretence for their infallibility relies upon the truth of the former propoſition, That the church of Rome is the catholick church; and that, they ſay, is infallible. And I have already ſhewn, that that propoſition is not only deſtitute of any good proof, but is as evidently falſe, as that a part of a thing is the whole.

2*dly*, But ſuppoſing it were true, that the Roman church were the catholick church; yet it is neither evident in itſelf, nor can be proved by them, that the catholick church of every age is infallible in deciding all controverſies of religion. It is granted by all Chriſtians, that our Saviour and his Apoſtles were infallible in

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the delivery of the Chriſtian doctrine; and they proved their infallibility by miracles. And this was neceſſary at firſt, for the ſecurity of our faith. But this doctrine being once delivered and tranſmitted down to us in the holy ſcriptures, written by the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, who were infallibly aſſiſted by the Holy Ghoſt; we have now a certain and infallible rule of faith and practice, which, with the aſſiſtance and inſtruction of thoſe guides and paſtors which Chriſt hath appointed in his church, is ſufficiently plain in all things neceſſary. And as there is no evidence of the continuance of infallibility in the guides and paſtors of the church in the ages which followed the Apoſtles, becauſe miracles are long ſince ceaſed; ſo there is no need of the continuance of it, for the preſervation of the true faith and religion; becauſe God hath ſufficiently provided for that, by that infallible rule of faith and manners which he hath left to his church in the holy ſcriptures, *which are* every way ſufficient and *able to make* both paſtors and people *wiſe unto ſalvation.*

3*dly*, As for a certain remedy againſt hereſy, it is certain God never intended there ſhould be any, no more than he hath provided a certain remedy againſt ſin and vice; which ſurely is every whit as contrary to the Chriſtian religion, and therefore as fit to be provided againſt as hereſy. But it is certain in experience, that God hath provided no certain and effectual remedy againſt ſin and vice; for which I can give no other reaſon, but that God does that which he thinks beſt and fitteſt, and not what we are apt to think to be ſo.

Beſides that infallibility is not a certain remedy againſt hereſy. The Apoſtles were certainly infallible; and yet they could neither prevent nor extinguiſh hereſy; which never more abounded than in the Apoſtles times. And St. Paul expreſsly tells us, 1 Cor. xi. 19. that *there muſt be hereſies, that they which are approved, may be made manifeſt.* And St. Peter, 2 epiſt. ii. 1. 2. that *there ſhould be falſe teachers* among Chriſtians, *who ſhould privily bring in damnable hereſies;* and that *many ſhould follow their pernicious ways.* But now, if there muſt be hereſies, either the church muſt not be infallible, or infallibility in the church is no certain remedy againſt them.

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I proceed to the next ſtep they make, *viz.*

6. That Chriſt hath always a viſible church upon earth; and that they can ſhew a church, which, from the time of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, hath always made a viſible profeſſion of the ſame doctrines and practices which are now believed and practiſed in the church of Rome; but that we can ſhew no viſible church, that, from the time of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, hath always oppoſed the church of Rome in thoſe doctrines and practices wich we now revile and find fault with in their church.

That Chriſt hath always had, and ever ſhall have, to the end of the world, a viſible church, profeſſing and practiſing his true faith and religion, is agreed on both ſides. But we ſay, that he hath no where promiſed, that this ſhall be free from all errors and corruptions in faith and practice. This the churches planted by the Apoſtles themſelves were not, even in their times, and during their abode amongſt them; and yet they were true parts of the Chriſtian catholick church. In the following ages, errors, and corruptions, and ſuperſtitions, did by degrees creep in, and grow up in ſeveral parts of the church; as St. Auſtin, and other of the fathers, complain of in their times. Since that, ſeveral famous parts of the Chriſtian church, both in Aſia and Africa, have not only been greatly corrupted, but have apoſtatized from the faith; ſo that in many places there are hardly any footſteps of Chriſtianity among them. But yet ſtill Chriſt hath had in all theſe ages a viſible church upon earth; though perhaps no part of it at all times free from ſome errors and corruptions; and in ſeveral parts of it great corruptions both in faith and practice; and in none I think more and longer than in the church of Rome, for all ſhe boaſts herſelf, like old Babylon, Iſ. xlvii. 7. 8. that *ſhe is a lady for ever; and ſays in her heart, I am, and none elſe beſides me;* and, like the church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. which ſaid, *I am rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing;* when the Spirit of God ſaith, that *ſhe was wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked; and knew it not.*

Thus the church of Rome boaſts, that ſhe hath in all ages been the true viſible church of Chriſt, and none beſides her, free from all errors in doctrine, and corrupti-

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ons in practice; and that, from the age of Christ and his Apostles, she hath always professed the same doctrines and practices which she does at this day. Can any thing be more shameless than this? Did they always believe transubstantiation? Let their Pope Gelasius speak for them; who expressly denies, that in the sacrament there is any substantial change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Was this always an article of their faith, and necessary to be believed by all Christians? Let Scotus, and several other of their schoolmen and learned writers speak for them. Was purgatory always believed in the Roman church, as it is now defined in the council of Trent? Let several of their learned men speak. In what father, in what council before that of Trent, do they find Christ to have instituted just seven sacraments, neither more nor less? And for practices in their religion, they themselves will not say, that in the ancient Christian church the scriptures were with-held from the people, and locked up in an unknown tongue; and that the publick service of God, the prayers and lessons, were read, and the sacraments celebrated in an unknown tongue; and that the sacrament of the Lord's supper was given to the people only in one kind. Where do they find in holy scripture, or in the doctrine and practice of the ancient Christian church, any command or example for the worship of images, for the invocation of saints and angels, and the blessed virgin; which do now make a great part of their religion? Nay, is not the doctrine of the scriptures, and of the ancient fathers, plainly against all these practices? With what face then can it be said, that the church of Rome hath made a constant visible profession of the same faith and practice in all ages, from the time of Christ and his Apostles? Or would the primitive church of Rome, if it should now visit the earth again, own the present church of Rome to be the same in all matters of faith and practice that it was when they left it?

And whereas they demand of us, to shew a visible church, from the time of Christ and his Apostles, that hath always opposed the church of Rome in those points of doctrine and practice which we object to them; what can be more impertinent than this demand; when they know,

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know, that, in all theſe points, we charge them with innovations in matters of faith and practice; and ſay, that thoſe things came in by degrees, ſeveral ages after the Apoſtles time, ſome ſooner, ſome later; as we are able to make good, and have done it? And would they have us ſhew them a viſible church that oppoſed theſe errors and corruptions in their church before ever they appeared? This we do not pretend to ſhew. And ſuppoſing they had not been at all oppoſed when they appeared, nor a long time after, nor till the reformation; yet if they be errors and corruptions of the Chriſtian doctrine, and contrary to the holy ſcriptures, and to the faith and practice of the primitive church, there is no preſcription againſt truth. It is never too late for any church to reject thoſe errors and corruptions, and to reform itſelf from them.

The bottom of all this matter is, they would have us to ſhew them a ſociety of Chriſtians that in all ages hath preſerved itſelf free from all ſuch errors and corruptions as we charge them withal, or elſe we deny the perpetual viſibility of the catholick church. No ſuch matter. We ſay, the church of Chriſt hath always been viſible in every age ſince Chriſt's time; and that the ſeveral ſocieties of Chriſtians, profeſſing the Chriſtian doctrine, and laws of Chriſt, have made up the catholick church; ſome parts whereof have, in ſeveral ages, fallen into great errors and corruptions; and no part of the catholick into more and greater than the church of Rome; ſo that it requires the utmoſt of our charity, to think that they are a true, though a very unſound and corrupt part of the catholick church of Chriſt.

We acknowledge likewiſe, that we were once involved in the like degeneracy; but, by the mercy of God, and pious care and prudence of thoſe that were in authority, are happily reſcued out of it. And though we were not out of the catholick church before; yet, ſince our reformation from the errors and corruptions of the church of Rome, we are in it upon better terms, and are a much ſounder part of it; and I hope, by the mercy and goodneſs of God, we ſhall for ever continue ſo.

So that to the perpetual viſibility of Chriſt's church, it is not neceſſary, that the whole Chriſtian church, nor indeed

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indeed that any part of it, ſhould be free from all errors and corruptions. Even the churches planted by the Apoſtles in the primitive times were not ſo. St. Paul reproves ſeveral doctrines and practices in the church of Corinth, and of Coloſſe, and of Galatia; and the Spirit of God, ſeveral things in the ſeven churches of Aſia: and yet all theſe were true parts and members of the catholick church of Chriſt, notwithſtanding theſe faults and errors; becauſe they all agreed in the main and eſſential doctrines of Chriſtianity. And when more and greater corruptions grew upon the church, or any part of it, the greater reaſon and need there was of a reformation. And as every particular perſon hath a right to reform any thing that he finds amiſs in himſelf, ſo far as concerns himſelf; ſo much more every national church hath a power within itſelf, to reform itſelf from all errors and corruptions, and, by the ſanction of the catholick authority, to confirm that reformation; which is our caſe here in England. And whatever part of the church, how great and eminent ſoever, excludes from her communion ſuch a national church, for reforming herſelf from plain errors and corruptions, clearly condemned by the word of God, and by the doctrine and practice of the primitive Chriſtian church, is undoubtedly guilty of ſchiſm. And this is the truth of the caſe between us and the church of Rome. And no blind talk about a perpetual viſible church can render us guilty of ſchiſm, for making a real reformation; or acquit them of it, for caſting us out of their communion for that cauſe.

7. and laſtly, to mention no more, They pretend, that we delude the people, by laying too much ſtreſs upon the ſcripture, and making it the only rule of faith and manners; whereas ſcripture and tradition together make up the entire rule of faith; and not ſcripture interpreted by every man's private fancy, but by tradition carefully preſerved in the church: ſo that it ought to be no wonder, if ſeveral of their doctrines and practices cannot be ſo clearly made out by ſcripture, or perhaps ſeem contrary to it, as it may be expounded by a private ſpirit; but not as interpreted by the tradition of the church, which can only give the true ſenſe of ſcripture: and therefore they are to underſtand, that ſeveral of

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thoſe doctrines and practices which we object againſt, are moſt clearly proved by the tradition of their church, which is of equal authority with ſcripture.

In this objection of theirs, which they deſign for the cover of all their errors and corruptions, there are ſeveral things diſtinctly to be conſidered; which I ſhall do as briefly as I can.

1. Whereas it is ſuggeſted, that we delude the people, by laying too much ſtreſs upon the ſcriptures, (which certainly we cannot well do, if it be the word of God), it ought to be conſidered, whether they do not delude and abuſe them infinitely more, in keeping the ſcriptures from them, and not ſuffering them to ſee that which they cannot deny to be at leaſt a conſiderable part of the rule of Chriſtian doctrine and practice. Doth it not, by this dealing of theirs, appear very ſuſpicious, that they are extremely afraid, that the people ſhould examine their doctrine and practice by this rule? For what other reaſon can they have to conceal it from them?

2. Whereas they affirm, that ſcripture alone is not the rule of Chriſtian faith and practice, but that ſcripture and oral tradition preſerved in the church, and delivered down from hand to hand, make up the entire rule; I would fain know, whence they learned this new doctrine of the rule of faith. I know, that the council of Trent declares it for the rule they intend to proceed upon, and make uſe of, for the confirmation and proof of their following determinations and decrees. But did any of the ancient councils of the Chriſtian church lay down this rule, and proceed upon it? Did not Conſtantine the Emperor, at the opening of the firſt general council, lay the Bible before them, as the only rule, according to which they were to proceed; and this with the approbation of all thoſe holy fathers that were aſſembled in that council? And did not following councils proceed upon the ſame rule? Do any of the ancient fathers ever mention any rule of Chriſtian faith and practice, beſides the holy ſcriptures, and the ancient creed; which, becauſe it is an abridgment of the neceſſary articles of Chriſtian faith contained in the holy ſcriptures, is by them frequently called *the rule of faith?* Do not the ſame fathers frequently and expreſsly ſay, that the ſcriptures are a perfect

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fect rule; and that all things are plainly contained in them which concern faith and life; and that whatever cannot be proved by teſtimony of ſcripture, is to be rejected? All this I am ſure I can make good by innumerable expreſs teſtimonies of the ancient fathers, which are well known to thoſe that are verſed in them. By what authority then hath the council of Trent ſet up this new rule, unknown to the Chriſtian church for one thouſand five hundred years? And who gave them this authority? The plain truth is, the neceſſity of it for the defence of the errors and corruptions which they had embraced, and were reſolved not to part with, forced them to lengthen out the rule; the old rule of the holy ſcriptures being too ſhort for their purpoſe.

2. Whereas they pretend, that holy ſcripture, as expounded by a private ſpirit, may not ſeem ſo favourable to ſome of their doctrines and practices; yet, as interpreted by tradition, which can only give the true ſenſe of ſcripture, it agrees very well with them: I ſuppoſe they mean, that whereas a private ſpirit would be apt to underſtand ſome texts of ſcripture, as if people were to ſearch and read the ſcripture; tradition interprets thoſe texts in a quite other ſenſe, that people are not to be permitted to read the holy ſcriptures. A private ſpirit would be apt to underſtand St. Paul's diſcourſe, in the 14th of the 1ſt to the Corinthians, to be againſt celebrating prayer and the ſervice of God in an unknown tongue, as being contrary to edification, and indeed to common ſenſe; for he ſays, *If one ſhould come, and find them ſpeaking and praying in an unknown tongue, will they not ſay, Ye are mad?* But now tradition, which only knows how to give the true ſenſe, can reconcile this diſcourſe of St. Paul very eaſily with the practice of the church of Rome in this matter: and ſo likewiſe the epiſtle of St. Paul to the Coloſſians, with the worſhip of angels; and the epiſtle to the Hebrews, with offering the propitiatory ſacrifice of Chriſt in the maſs a thouſand times every day. And to give but one inſtance more: Whereas a man, by his private ſpirit, would be very apt to underſtand the ſecond commandment to forbid all worſhip of images; tradition diſcovers the meaning of this commandment to be, that due veneration is to be given to them. So that,

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at this rate of interpreting ſcripture by tradition, it is impoſſible to fix any objection from ſcripture upon any doctrine or practice which they have a mind to maintain.

4. Whereas they pretend the tradition of their church, delivered from the mouth of Chriſt, or dictated by the Holy Spirit, and brought down to them, and preſerved by continual ſucceſſion in the church, to be of equal authority with the word of God; for ſo the council of Trent ſays, that "the holy ſynod doth receive and venerate theſe traditions with equal pious affection and reverence as they do the written word of God:" this we muſt declare againſt, as unreaſonable in itſelf, to make tradition, conveyed by word of mouth from one to another, through ſo many ages, and liable to ſo many miſtakes and miſcarriages, to be, at the diſtance of one thouſand five hundred years, of equal certainty and authority with the holy ſcriptures, carefully preſerved, and tranſmitted down to us; becauſe this, as I ſaid before, is to make common rumour and report of equal authority and certainty with a written record. And not only ſo, but hereby they make the ſcriptures an imperfect rule, contrary to the declared judgment of the ancient fathers and councils of the Chriſtian church; and ſo, in truth, they ſet up a new rule of faith, whereby they change the Chriſtian religion: for a new rule of faith and religion, makes a new faith and religion. This we charge the church of Rome with; and do challenge them to ſhew this new rule of faith before the council of Trent, and, conſequently, where their religion was before that council; to ſhew a religion, conſiſting of all thoſe articles which are defined by the council of Trent as neceſſary to ſalvation, and eſtabliſhed upon this new rule, profeſſed by any Chriſtian church in the world before that time. And as they have pitched upon a new rule of faith; ſo it is eaſy to ſee to what end. For take Pope Pius IV.'s creed, and we may ſee where the old and new religion parts; even at the end of the twelve articles of the Apoſtles creed, which was the ancient Chriſtian faith; to which are added in Pope Pius's creed twelve articles more, defined in the council of Trent, and ſupported only by tradition. So that as the

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ſcripture anſwers for the twelve old articles, which are plainly contained there; ſo tradition is to anſwer for the twelve new ones. And therefore the matter was calculated very exactly, when they make tradition juſt of equal authority with the ſcriptures; becauſe as many articles of their faith were to be made good by it, and rely upon it, as thoſe which are proved by the authority of ſcripture. But that tradition is of equal authority with the ſcriptures, we have nothing in the whole world for it, but the bare aſſertion of the council of Trent.

I ſhould now have added ſome other conſiderations, tending to confirm and eſtabliſh us in our religion, againſt the pretences and inſinuations of ſeducing ſpirits. But I ſhall proceed no farther at preſent.

SERMON LXIII.

Of conſtancy in the profeſſion of the true religion.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

The ſixth ſermon on this text.

THeſe words contain an exhortation to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering;* and an argument or encouragement thereto, *Becauſe he is faithful that promiſed.* By the exhortation to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering,* is not meant, that thoſe who are capable of examining the grounds and reaſons of their religion, ſhould blindly hold it faſt againſt the beſt reaſons that can be offered; becauſe, upon theſe terms, every man muſt continue in the religion in which he happens to be fixed by education, or an ill choice, be his religion true or falſe, without examining and looking into it, whether it be right or wrong: for, till a man examines, every man thinks his religion

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religion right. That which the Apoſtle here exhorts Chriſtians to *hold faſt*, is the ancient faith, of which all Chriſtians make a ſolemn profeſſion in their baptiſm; as plainly appears from the context. And this *profeſſion of our faith* we are *to hold* in the following inſtances; which I ſhall but briefly mention, without enlarging upon them.

1. We are to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith*, againſt the confidence of men, without ſcripture or reaſon to ſupport that confidence.

2. And much more againſt the confidence of men, contrary to plain ſcripture and reaſon, and to the common ſenſe of mankind.

3. Againſt all the temptations and terrors of the world; againſt the temptations of faſhion and example, and of worldly intereſt and advantage; and againſt all terrors and ſufferings of perſecution.

4. Againſt all vain promiſes of being put into a ſafer condition, and groundleſs hopes of getting to heaven upon eaſier terms than the goſpel has propoſed, in ſome other church and religion.

5. Laſtly, We are to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*, againſt all the cunning arts and inſinuations of buſy and diſputing men, whoſe deſign it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to make proſelytes to their party and faction.

But, without entering into theſe particulars, I ſhall, in order to our eſtabliſhment in the reformed religion, which we profeſs, in oppoſition to the errors and corruptions of the church of Rome, apply myſelf at this time, to make a ſhort compariſon betwixt the religion which we profeſs, and that of the church of Rome, that we may diſcern on which ſide the advantage of truth lies; and, in making this compariſon, I ſhall inſiſt upon three things, which will bring the matter to an iſſue, and are, I think, ſufficient to determine every ſober and conſiderate man, which of theſe he ought in reaſon, and with regard to the ſafety of his ſoul, to embrace. And they are theſe:

1. That we govern our belief and practice in matters of religion by the true ancient rule of Chriſtianity, the word of God contained in the holy ſcriptures: but the church of Rome, for the maintenance of their errors and

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corruptions, have been forced to deviſe a new rule, never owned by the primitive church, nor by the ancient fathers and councils of it.

2. That the doctrines and practices in difference betwixt us and the church of Rome, are either contrary to this rule, or deſtitute of the warrant and authority of it, and are plain additions to the ancient Chriſtianity, and corruptions of it.

3. That our religion hath many clear advantages of that of the church of Rome, not only very conſiderable in themſelves, but very obvious and diſcernible to an ordinary capacity, upon the firſt propoſal of them. I ſhall be as brief in theſe as I can.

1. That we govern our belief and practice in matters of religion, by the true ancient rule of Chriſtianity, the word of God contained in the holy ſcriptures: but the church of Rome, for the maintaining of their errors and corruptions, have been forced to deviſe a new rule, never owned by the primitive church, nor by the ancient councils and fathers of it; that is, they have joined with the word of God contained in the holy ſcriptures, the unwritten traditions of their church, concerning ſeveral points of their faith and practice, which they acknowledge cannot be proved from ſcripture; and theſe they call the unwritten word of God; and the council of Trent hath decreed them to be "of equal authority "with the holy ſcriptures;" and that they do "receive "and venerate them with the ſame pious affection and "reverence:" and all this contrary to the expreſs declaration and unanimous conſent of all the ancient councils and fathers of the Chriſtian church, as I have already ſhewn: and this never declared to be a point of faith, till it was decreed, not much above a hundred years ago, in the council of Trent. And this ſurely, if any thing, is a matter of great conſequence, to preſume to alter the ancient rule of Chriſtian doctrine and practice, and to enlarge it and add to it at their pleaſure. But the church of Rome having made ſo great a change in the doctrine and practice of Chriſtianity, it became conſequently neceſſary to make a change of the rule: and therefore with great reaſon did the council of Trent take this into conſideration in the firſt place, and put it in

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in the front of their decrees; because it was to be the foundation and main proof of the following definitions of faith, and decrees of practice; for which, without this new rule, there had been no colour.

2. The doctrines and practices in difference betwixt us and the church of Rome, are either contrary to the true rule, or destitute of the warrant and authority of it, and plain additions to the ancient Christianity, and corruptions of it. The truth of this will best appear, by instancing in some of the principal doctrines and practices in difference betwixt us.

As for their two great fundamental doctrines, of the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome over all the Christians in the world, and the infallibility of their church, there is not one word in scripture concerning these privileges. Nay, it is little less than a demonstration that they have no such privileges, that St. Paul, in a long epistle to the church of Rome, takes no notice of them, that the church of Rome either then was, or was to be soon after, the mother and mistress of all churches, which is now grown to be an article of faith in the church of Rome; and yet it is hardly to be imagined, that he could have omitted to take notice of such remarkable privileges of their Bishops and church above any in the world, had he known they had belonged to them. So that in all probability he was ignorant of those mighty prerogatives of the church of Rome; otherwise it cannot be, but that he would have written with more deference and submission to this seat of infallibility, and centre of unity: he would certainly have paid a greater respect to this mother and mistress of all churches, where the head of the church, and Vicar of Christ, either was already seated, or, by the appointment of Christ, was designed for ever to fix his throne, and establish his residence. But there is not one word, or the least intimation of any such thing throughout this whole epistle, nor in any other part of the New Testament.

Besides that both these pretended privileges are omitted, by plain fact and evidence of things themselves; their supremacy, in that the far greatest part of the Christian church neither is at this day, nor can be shewn by the records of any age, ever to have been subject to

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the Biſhop of Rome, or to have acknowledged his authority and juriſdiction over them. And the infallibility of the Pope, whether with or without a general council, about which they ſtill differ, though infallibility was deviſed on purpoſe to determine all differences; I ſay, this infallibility, where-ever it is pretended to be, is plainly confuted by the contradictory definitions of ſeveral Popes and councils: for if they have contradicted one another, as is plain beyond all contradiction, in ſeveral inſtances, then there muſt of neceſſity be an error on one ſide: and there can be no ſo certain demonſtration that any one is infallible, as evident error and miſtake is of the contrary.

Next, their concealing both the rule of religion, and the practice of it in the worſhip and ſervice of God, from the people, in an unknown tongue, and their adminiſtering the communion to the people in one kind only, contrary to clear ſcripture, and the plain inſtitution of our bleſſed Saviour. And then their worſhip of images, and invocation of angels and ſaints, and the bleſſed virgin, in the ſame ſolemn manner, and for the ſame bleſſings and benefits which we beg of God himſelf, contrary to the expreſs word of God, which commands us *to worſhip the Lord our God, and to ſerve him only*; and which declares, that as there is but *one God*, ſo there is but *one mediator between God and men, Chriſt Jeſus*, (but *one mediator*, not only of redemption, but of interceſſion too; for the Apoſtle there ſpeaks of a mediator of interceſſion), by whom only we are to offer up our prayers, which are to be put up to God only; and which expreſsly forbids men to worſhip any image or likeneſs. And the learned men of their own church acknowledge, that there is neither precept nor example for theſe practices in ſcripture; and that they were not uſed in the Chriſtian church for ſeveral ages. And this acknowledgment we think very conſiderable; ſince ſo great a part of their religion, eſpecially as it is practiſed among the people, is contained in theſe points. For the ſervice of God in an unknown tongue, and with-holding the ſcriptures from the people, they do not pretend ſo much as one teſtimony of any father for the firſt ſix hundred years. And nothing certainly can be more unreaſonable in

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in itſelf, than to deny people the beſt means of knowing the will of God, and not to permit them to underſtand what is done in the publick worſhip of God, and what prayers are put up to him in the church.

The two great doctrines of tranſubſtantiation and purgatory are acknowledged by many of their own learned writers to have no certain foundation in ſcripture: and that there are ſeven ſacraments of the Chriſtian religion, though it be now made an article of faith by the council of Trent, is a thing which cannot be ſhewn in any council or father for above a thouſand years after Chriſt. And we find no mention of this number of the ſacraments, till the age of Peter Lombard, the father of the ſchoolmen.

That the church of Rome is the mother and miſtreſs of all churches, though that alſo be one of the new articles of Pope Pius IV.'s creed, which their prieſts are by a ſolemn oath obliged to believe and teach; yet it is moſt evidently falſe. That ſhe is not the mother of all churches, is plain; becauſe Jeruſalem was certainly ſo; for there certainly was the firſt Chriſtian church, and from thence all the Chriſtian churches in the world derive themſelves. That ſhe is not, though ſhe fain would be, the miſtreſs of all churches, is as evident; becauſe the greateſt part of the Chriſtian church does at this day, and always did deny, that ſhe hath any authority or ſupremacy over them. Now, theſe are the principal matters in difference betwixt us. And if theſe points, and a few more, be pared off from Popery, that which remains of their religion, is the ſame with ours; that is, the true ancient Chriſtianity.

3. I ſhall ſhew that our religion hath many clear advantages of theirs, not only very conſiderable in themſelves, but very obvious and diſcernible to an ordinary capacity, upon the very firſt propoſal of them. As,

1. That our religion agrees perfectly with the ſcriptures; and all points both of our belief and practice, eſteemed by us as neceſſary to ſalvation, are there contained, even our enemies themſelves being judges. We *worſhip the Lord our God, and him only* do we *ſerve*. We do not fall down before images, and worſhip them: we addreſs all prayers to God alone, by the only mediation and

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and interceſſion of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, as he himſelf hath given us commandment, and as St. Paul doth plainly direct; giving us this plain and ſubſtantial reaſon for it, becauſe as there is but *one God*, ſo there is but *one mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus.*

The publick worſhip and ſervice of God is performed by us in a language which we underſtand, according to St. Paul's expreſs order and direction, and the univerſal practice of the ancient church, and the nature and reaſon of the thing itſelf. We adminiſter the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper in both kinds, according to our Saviour's example and plain inſtitution, and the continual practice of all the Chriſtian churches in the world for above a thouſand years.

2. We believe nothing as neceſſary to ſalvation, but what hath been owned in all ages to be the Chriſtian doctrine, and is acknowledged ſo to be by the church of Rome itſelf; and we receive the whole faith of the primitive Chriſtian church, *viz.* whatever is contained in the Apoſtles creed, and in the explications of that in the creeds of the four firſt general councils. By which it plainly appears, that all the points of faith in difference betwixt us and the church of Rome, are mere innovations, and plain additions to the ancient Chriſtian faith: but all that we believe, is acknowledged by them to be undoubtedly the ancient Chriſtian faith.

3. There is nothing wanting in our church and religion, whether in matter of faith or practice, which either the ſcripture makes neceſſary to ſalvation, or was ſo eſteemed by the Chriſtian church for the firſt five hundred years; and we truſt, that what was ſufficient for the ſalvation of Chriſtians in the beſt ages of Chriſtianity for five hundred years together, may be ſo ſtill; and we are very well content to venture our ſalvation upon the ſame terms that they did.

4. Our religion is not only free from all idolatrous worſhip, but even from all ſuſpicion and probable charge of any ſuch thing: but this the church of Rome is not, as is acknowledged by her moſt learned champions, and as no man of ingenuity can deny. And the reaſon which the learned men give, why the worſhip of images, and the invocation of angels, and ſaints departed, were not practiſed

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practised in the primitive church for the first three hundred years, is a plain acknowledgment that these practices are very liable to the suspicion of idolatry: for they say, that the Christians did then forbear those practices, because they seemed to come too near to the Pagan idolatry, and lest the Heathen should have taken occasion to have justified themselves, if these things had been practised among Christians: and they cannot now be ignorant what scandal they give by these practices both to the Jews and Turks, and how much they alienate them from Christianity by this scandal; nor can they chuse but be sensible, upon how great disadvantage they are in defending these practices from the charge of idolatry; and that by all their blind distinctions, with which they raise such a cloud and dust, they can hardly make any plausible and tolerable defence of themselves from this charge; insomuch that to secure their own people from discerning their guilt in this matter, they have been put upon that shameful shift of leaving out the second commandment in their common catechisms and manuals, lest the people, seeing so plain a law of God against so common a practice of their church, should upon that discovery have broken off from them.

5. Nor is our religion incumbered with such an endless number of superstitious and troublesome observances, as theirs infinitely is, even beyond the number of the Jewish ceremonies, to the great burden and scandal of the Christian religion, and the diverting of mens minds from the spiritual part of religion, and the more weighty and necessary duties of the Christian life; so that, in truth, a devout pastor is so taken up with the external rites and little observances of his religion, that he hath little or no time to make himself a good man, and to cultivate and improve his mind in true piety and virtue.

6. Our religion is evidently more charitable to all Christians that differ from us, and particularly to them, who, by their uncharitableness to us, have done as much as is possible to discharge and damp our charity towards them. And charity, as it is one of the most essential marks of a true Christian, so it is likewise the best mark and ornament of a true church; and of all things that can be thought of, methinks the want of charity in any church should

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ſhould be a motive to no man to fall in love with it, and to be fond of its communion.

7. Our religion doth not claſh and interfere with any of the great moral duties to which all mankind ſtand obliged by the law and light of nature; as fidelity, mercy, and truth. We do not teach men to break faith with hereticks or infidels; nor to deſtroy and extirpate thoſe who differ from us with fire and ſword: no ſuch thing as equivocation, or mental reſervation, or any other artificial way of falſhood, is either taught or maintained, either by the doctrine, or by the caſuiſts of our church.

8. Our religion, and all the doctrines of it, are perfectly conſiſtent with the peace of civil government, and the welfare of human ſociety. We neither exempt the clergy from ſubjection to the civil powers, nor abſolve ſubjects, upon any pretence whatſoever, from allegiance to their princes; both which points, the neceſſity of the one, and the lawfulneſs of the other, have been taught and ſtiffly maintained in the church of Rome, not only by private doctors, but by Popes and general councils.

9. The doctrines of our religion are perfectly free from all ſuſpicion of a worldly intereſt and deſign; whereas the greateſt part of the erroneous doctrines with which we charge the church of Rome, are plainly calculated to promote the end of worldly greatneſs and dominion.

The Pope's kingdom is plainly of this world; and the doctrines and maxims of it, like ſo many ſervants, are ready upon all occaſions to fight for him. For moſt of them do plainly tend, either to the eſtabliſhment and enlargement of his authority, or to the magnifying of the prieſts, and the giving them a perfect power over the conſciences of the people, and the keeping them in a ſlaviſh ſubjection and blind obedience to them. And to this purpoſe do plainly tend the doctrines of exempting the clergy from the ſecular power and juriſdiction; the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; for it muſt needs make the prieſt a great man in the opinion of the people, to believe that he can *make God*, as they love to expreſs it, without all reaſon and reverence. Of the like tendency is the communicating of the laity only in one kind, thereby making it the ſole privilege of the prieſt to receive the ſacrament in both; the with-holding the ſcripture from the

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the people, and celebrating the service of God in an unknown tongue; the doctrine of an implicit faith, and absolute resignation of their judgments to their teachers: these do all directly tend to keep the people in ignorance, and to bring them to a blind obedience to the dictates of their teachers. So likewise the necessity of the intention of the priest to the saving virtue and efficacy of the sacraments; by which doctrine, the people do upon the matter depend as much upon the good-will of the priest, as upon the mercy of God, for their salvation. But, above all, their doctrine of the necessity of auricular and private confession of all mortal sins committed after baptism, with all the circumstances of them, to the priest; and this not only for the ease and direction of their consciences, but as a necessary condition of having their sins pardoned and forgiven by God: by which means they make themselves masters of all the secrets of the people, and keep them in awe by the knowledge of their faults: *Scire volunt secreta domûs, atque inde timeri.* Or else their doctrines tend to filthy lucre, and the enriching of their church: as their doctrines of purgatory and indulgences, and their prayers and masses for the dead, and many more doctrines and practices of the like kind, plainly do.

10. Our religion is free from all disingenuous and dishonest arts of maintaining and supporting itself. Such are, clipping of ancient authors, nay, and even the authors and writers of their own church, when they speak too freely of any point; as may be seen in their *indices expurgatorii*, which, much against their wills, have been brought to light. To which I shall only add these three gross forgeries, which lie all at their doors, and they cannot deny them to be so.

1*st*, The pretended canon of the council of Nice in the case of appeals, between the church of Rome and the African church: upon which they insisted a great while very confidently, till at last they were convinced by authentick copies of the canons of that council.

2*dly*, Constantine's donation to the Pope, which they kept a great stir with, till the forgery of it was discovered.

3*dly*, The decretal epistles of the ancient Popes; a large

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large volume of forgeries compiled by Iſidore Mercator, to countenance the uſurpations of the Biſhop of Rome; and of which the church of Rome made a great uſe for ſeveral ages, and pertinaciouſly defended the authority of them, till the learned men of their own church have at laſt been forced for very ſhame to diſclaim them, and to confeſs the impoſture of them. A like inſtance whereto is not I hope to be ſhown in any Chriſtian church. This is that which St. Paul calls κυβεία, *the ſleight of men*, ſuch as gameſters uſe at dice; for to alledge falſe and forged authors in this caſe, is to play with falſe dice, when the ſalvation of mens ſouls lies at ſtake.

11. Our religion has this mighty advantage, that it doth not decline trial and examination, which to any man of ingenuity muſt needs appear a very good ſign of an honeſt cauſe; but if any church be ſhy of having her religion examined, and her doctrines and practices brought into the open light, this gives juſt ground of ſuſpicion that ſhe hath ſome diſtruſt of them; for truth doth not ſeek corners, nor ſhun the light. Our Saviour hath told us who they are that *love darkneſs rather than light*, viz. *they* whoſe *deeds are evil: for every one* (ſaith he) *that doth evil, hateth the light; neither cometh he to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved, and made manifeſt.* There needs no more to render a religion ſuſpected to a wiſe man, than to ſee thoſe who profeſs it, and make ſuch proud boaſts of the truth and goodneſs of it, ſo fearful that it ſhould be examined and looked into, and that their people ſhould take the liberty to hear and read what can be ſaid againſt it.

12. We perſuade men to our religion by human and Chriſtian ways, ſuch as our Saviour and his Apoſtles uſed, by urging men with the authority of God, and with arguments fetched from another world; the promiſe of eternal life and happineſs, and the threatening of eternal death and miſery; which are the proper arguments of religion, and which alone are fitted to work upon the minds and conſciences of men. The terror and torture of death may make men hypocrites, and awe them to profeſs with their mouths what they do not believe in their hearts; but this is no proper means of converting the ſoul, and convincing the minds and conſciences

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ſciences of men. And theſe violent and cruel ways cannot be denied to have been practiſed in the church of Rome, and ſet on foot by the authority of councils, and greatly countenanced and encouraged by Popes themſelves. Witneſs the many croiſades for the extirpation of hereticks, the ſtanding cruelties of their inquiſition, their occaſional maſſacres and perſecutions; of which we have freſh inſtances in every age.

But theſe methods of converſion are a certain ſign, that they either diſtruſt the truth and goodneſs of their cauſe, or elſe that they think truth, and the arguments for it, are of no force, when dragoons are their *ratio ultima*, the laſt reaſon which their cauſe relies upon, and the beſt and moſt effectual it can afford.

Again, we hold no doctrines in defiance of the ſenſes of all mankind; ſuch as is that of tranſubſtantiation, which is now declared in the church of Rome to be a neceſſary article of faith; ſo that a man cannot be of that religion, unleſs he will renounce his ſenſes, and believe againſt the clear verdict of them in a plain ſenſible matter. But, after this, I do not underſtand how a man can believe any thing; becauſe, by this very thing, he deſtroys and takes away the foundation of all certainty. If any man forbid me to believe what I ſee, I forbid him to believe any thing, upon better and ſurer evidence. St. Paul ſaith, that *faith cometh by hearing*. But if I cannot rely upon the certainty of ſenſe, then the means whereby faith is conveyed is uncertain; and we may ſay as St. Paul doth in another caſe, *then is our preaching vain, and your faith alſo is vain.*

13. Laſtly, (to mention no more particulars), as to ſeveral things uſed and practiſed in the church of Rome, we are on much the ſafer ſide, if we ſhould happen to be miſtaken about them, than they are, if they ſhould be miſtaken: for it is certainly lawful to read the ſcriptures, and lawful to permit to the people the uſe of the ſcriptures in a known tongue; otherwiſe we muſt condemn the Apoſtles and the primitive church for allowing this liberty. It is certainly lawful to have the publick prayers and ſervice of God celebrated in a language which all that join in it can underſtand. It is certainly lawful to adminiſter the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper to the peo-

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ple in both kinds; otherwiſe the Chriſtian church would not have done it for a thouſand years. It is certainly lawful not to worſhip images, not to pray to angels, or ſaints, or the bleſſed virgin; otherwiſe the primitive church would not have forborn theſe practices for three hundred years, as is acknowledged by thoſe of the church of Rome.

Suppoſe a man ſhould pray to God only, and offer up all his prayers to him only by Jeſus Chriſt, without making mention of any other mediator or interceſſor with God for us, relying herein upon what the Apoſtle ſays concerning our *High Prieſt, Jeſus the Son of God*, Heb. vii. 25. that *he is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt, who come unto God by him, (i. e.* by his mediation and interceſſion), *ſince he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them*; might not a man reaſonably hope to obtain of God all the bleſſings he ſtands in need of, by addreſſing himſelf only to him in the name and by the interceſſion of that *one Mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus?* Nay, why may not a man reaſonably think, that this is both a ſhorter and more effectual way to obtain our requeſts, than by turning ourſelves to the angels and ſaints, and importuning them to ſolicit God for us; eſpecially if we ſhould order the matter ſo, as to make ten times more frequent addreſſes to theſe, than we do to God and our bleſſed Saviour; and, in compariſon of the other, to neglect theſe? We cannot certainly think any more able to help us, and do us good, than the great God of heaven and earth, *the God* (as the Pſalmiſt ſtyles him) *that heareth prayers*, and therefore *unto him ſhould all fleſh come*. We cannot certainly think any interceſſor ſo powerful and prevalent with God, as his only and dearly beloved Son, offering up our prayers to God in heaven, by virtue of that moſt acceptable and invaluable ſacrifice which he offered to him on earth. We cannot ſurely think, that there is ſo much goodneſs any where as in God; that in any of the angels or ſaints, or even in the bleſſed mother of our Lord, there is more mercy and compaſſion for ſinners, and a tenderer ſenſe of our infirmities, than in the Son of God, *who is at the right hand of his Father, to appear in the preſence of God for us*. We are ſure, that God always hears the petitions which we

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we put up to him; and so does the Son of God, by whom we put them up to the Father, because he also is *God blessed for evermore.* But we are not sure that the angels and saints hear our prayers, because we are sure that they are neither omniscient nor omnipresent; and we are not sure, nor probably certain, that our prayers are made known to them any other way, there being no revelation of God to that purpose. We are sure, that God hath declared himself to be *a jealous God,* and that *he will not give his honour to another;* and we are not sure but that prayer is part of the honour which is due to God alone: and if it were not, we can hardly think but that God should be so far from being pleased with our making so frequent use of those other mediators and intercessors, and from granting our desires the sooner upon that account; that, on the contrary, we have reason to think he should be highly offended, when he himself is ready to receive all our petitions, and hath appointed a great Mediator to that purpose, to see more addresses made to, and by the angels and saints, and blessed virgin, than to himself by his blessed Son; and to see the worship of himself almost jostled out, by the devotion of people to saints and angels, and the blessed mother of our Lord: A thing which he never commanded, and which, so far as appears by scripture, never came into his mind. I have been the longer upon this matter, to shew how unreasonable, and needless at the best, this more than half part of the religion of the church of Rome is, and how safely it may be let alone.

But now, on the other hand, if they be mistaken in these things, as we can demonstrate from scripture they are, the danger is infinitely great on that side: for then they oppose an institution of Christ, who appointed the sacrament to be received in both kinds; and they involve themselves in a great danger of the guilt of idolatry, and our common Christianity in the scandal and reproach of it; and this without any necessity, since *God hath required none of these things at our hands:* and after all the bustle which hath been made about them, the utmost they pretend, (which yet they are not able to make good), is, that these things may lawfully be done; and, at the same time, they cannot deny, but that, if the church had

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not injoined them, they might lawfully be let alone. And can any thing be more unreasonable, than so pertinaciously to insist upon things so hard, I may say impossible, to be defended or excused; and which, by their own acknowledgment, are of no great weight and necessity; in which we are certainly safe in not doing them, if they should prove lawful; but if they do not prove so, they are in a most dangerous condition? So that here is certain safety on the one hand, and the danger of damnation on the other; which is as great odds as is possible.

And they must not tell us that they are in no danger, because they are infallible, and cannot be mistaken; they must prove that point a great deal better than they have yet done, before it can signify any thing either to our satisfaction or their safety..

I might have insisted more largely upon each of these particulars; any one of which is of weight to incline a man to that religion which hath such an advantage on its side; but all of them together make so powerful an argument to an unprejudiced person, as must almost irresistibly determine his choice: for most of the particulars are so evident, that they cannot, upon the very mention and proposal of them, be denied to be clear advantages on our side.

And now, to use the words of St. Peter, *I testify unto you, that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand*; that the reformed religion which we profess, and which, by the goodness of God, is by law established in this nation, is the true ancient Christianity; *the faith* which was *at first delivered to the saints*, and which is conveyed down to us in the writings of the Apostles and the Evangelists of our Lord and Saviour. *Remember therefore how ye have received and heard, and hold fast; for he is faithful that* hath *promised*; which is the *Second* part of the text, the encouragement which the Apostle gives us to *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering: He is faithful that* hath *promised* to give us *his Holy Spirit, to lead us into all truth*; to *establish, strengthen, and settle us* in the profession of it; to support and comfort us under all trials and temptations, and to *seal us up to the day of redemption*; and *he is faithful that* hath *promised* to reward

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our constancy and fidelity to him and his truth, with a crown of everlasting life and glory. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable,* and *always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; for he is faithful that* hath *promised.* And *let us provoke one another to charity and good works,* which are the great ornament and glory of any religion; *and so much the more, because the day approacheth in which God will judge* the belief and lives of *men by Jesus Christ;* not according to the imperious and uncharitable dictates of any church, but *according to the gospel of his Son.* To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory now and for ever.

Now the God of peace which brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good word and work, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight. And *the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

SERMON LXIV.

The Christian life a life of faith.

2 COR. v. 7.

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

IN the latter part of the former chapter, the Apostle declares what it was that was the great support of Christians under the persecutions and sufferings which befel them, *viz.* the assurance of a blessed resurrection to another life, ℣ 14. *Knowing, that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus: For which cause* (saith he, ℣ 16.) *we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day:* that is, though our bodies, by reason of the hard-

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ships and sufferings which we undergo, are continually decaying and declining; yet our minds grow every day more healthful and vigorous, and gain new strength and resolution, by contemplating the glory and reward of another world, and as it were feeding upon them by faith: *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.*

And he resumes the same argument again at the beginning of this chapter: *For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;* that is, we are firmly persuaded, that when we die, we shall but exchange these earthly and perishing bodies, these houses of clay, for a heavenly mansion, which will never decay, nor come to ruin. From whence he concludes, ℣ 6. *Therefore we are always confident,* (θαῤῥοῦντες ἐν πάντοτε, therefore, whatever happens to us, we are always of good courage, and see no reason to be afraid of death), *knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;* that is, since our continuance in the body is to our disadvantage, and while we live we are absent from our happiness, and when we die we shall then enter upon the possession of it. That which gives us this confidence and good courage, is our faith: for though we be not actually possessed of this happiness which we speak of; yet we have a firm persuasion of the reality of it; which is enough to support our spirits, and keep up our courage, under all afflictions and adversities whatsoever: ℣ 7. *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

These words come in by way of parenthesis; in which the Apostle declares in general what is the swaying and governing principle of a Christian life, not only in case of persecution and affliction, but under all events, and in every condition of human life; and that is faith, in opposition to sight and present enjoyment: *We walk by faith,* and *not by sight. We walk by faith:* whatever principle sways and governs a man's life and actions, he is said to walk and live by it. And as here a Christian is said to *walk by faith,* so elsewhere the *just* is said to *live by*

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by faith. Faith is the principle which animates all his resolutions and actions.

And *not by sight.* The word is εἶδος, which signifies the thing itself in present view and possession, in opposition to a firm persuasion of things future and invisible. Sight is the thing in hand, and faith the thing only in hope and expectation. Sight is a clear view and apprehension of things present, and near to us; faith an obscure discovery and apprehension of things at a distance. So the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. *Now we see through a glass, darkly;* this is faith: *but then face to face;* this is present sight, as one man sees another face to face. And thus likewise the same Apostle distinguisheth betwixt hope and sight, Rom. viii. 24. 25. *Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.* Sight is possession and enjoyment; faith is the firm persuasion and expectation of a thing. And this the Apostle tells us was the governing principle of a Christian's life: *For we walk by faith,* and *not by sight.* From which words I shall observe these three things.

1. That faith is the governing principle, and that which bears the great sway in the life and actions of a Christian: *We walk by faith;* that is, we order and govern our lives in the power and virtue of this principle.

2. Faith is a degree of assent inferior to that of sense. This is sufficiently intimated in the opposition betwixt faith and sight. He had said before, that *whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;* and gives this as a reason and proof of our absence from the Lord, *For we walk by faith,* and *not by sight;* that is, whilst we are in the body, we do not see and enjoy, but believe and expect: if we were present with the Lord, then faith would cease, and be turned into sight: but though we have not that assurance of another world, which we shall have when we come to see and enjoy these things; yet we are firmly persuaded of them.

3. Notwithstanding faith be an inferior degree of assurance; yet it is a principle of sufficient power to govern

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vern our lives: *We walk by faith.* It is such an assurance as hath an influence upon our lives.

I. That faith is the governing principle, and that which bears the great sway in the life and actions of a Christian: *We walk by faith*; that is, we order and govern our lives in the power and virtue of this principle. A Christian's life consists in obedience to the will of God; that is, in a readiness to do what he commands, and in a willingness to suffer what he calls us to: and the great arguments and encouragements hereto, are such things as are the objects of faith, and not of sense; such things as are absent and future, and not present and in possession; for instance, the belief of an invisible God, of a secret power and providence, that orders and governs all things, that can bless or blast us, and all our designs and undertakings, according as we demean ourselves towards him, and endeavour to approve ourselves to him; the persuasion of a secret aid and influence always ready at hand to keep us from evil, and to strengthen and assist us to that which is good; more especially, the firm belief and expectation of the happiness of heaven, and the glorious rewards of another world; which though they be now at a distance, and invisible to us, yet, being grounded upon the promise of *God that cannot lie,* shall certainly be made good.

And this faith, this firm persuasion of absent and invisible things, the Apostle to the Hebrews tells us, was the great principle of the piety and virtue of good men from the beginning of the world. This he calls, chap. xi. 1. the ὑπόστασις, or *the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the proof,* or *evidence, of things not seen, viz.* a firm persuasion of the being and providence of God, and of the truth and faithfulness of his promises. Such was the faith of Abel: he believed *that there was a God,* and that *he was a rewarder of those that faithfully serve him.* Such was the faith of Noah; who being warned of God of things at a great distance, and not seen as yet, notwithstanding believed the divine prediction concerning the flood, and prepared an ark. Such also was the faith of Abraham, concerning a numerous posterity by Isaac, and the inheritance of the land of Canaan. And such likewise was the faith of Moses:

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he did as firmly believe the invisible God, and the recompence of reward, as if he had beheld them with his eyes.

And of this recompence of reward we Christians have a much clearer revelation, and much greater assurance, than former ages and generations had: and the firm belief and persuasion of this is the great motive and argument to a holy life; *the hope which is set before us* of obtaining the happiness, and the fear of incurring the misery of another world. This made the primitive Christians with so much patience to bear the sufferings and persecutions, with so much constancy to venture upon the dangers and inconveniences which the love of God and religion exposed them to.

Under the former dispensation of the law, though good men received good hopes of the rewards of another life, yet these things were but obscurely revealed to them; and the great inducements to obedience were, temporal rewards and punishments, the promises of long life, and peace, and plenty, and prosperity, in that good land which God had given them; and the threatenings of war, and famine, and pestilence, and being delivered into captivity. But now, under the gospel, *life and immortality are brought to light*; and the great arguments that bear sway with Christians, are, the promises of everlasting life, and the threatenings of eternal misery: and the firm belief and persuasion of these is now the great principle that governs the lives and actions of good men: for what will not men do that are really persuaded, that as they do demean themselves in this world, it will fare with them in the other; that *the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment*, and *the righteous into life eternal?* I proceed to the

II. Second observation, namely, That faith is a degree of assent inferior to that of sense. This is intimated in the opposition betwixt faith and sight: *We walk by faith*, and *not by sight*; that is, we believe these things, and are confidently persuaded of the truth of them, though we never saw them; and consequently cannot possibly have that degree of assurance concerning the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, which those have who enjoy the one and endure the other.

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There are different degrees of assurance concerning things, arising from the different degrees of evidence we have for them. The highest degree of evidence we have for any thing, is our own sense and experience: and this is so firm and strong, that it is not to be shaken by the utmost pretence of a rational demonstration. Men will trust their own senses and experience, against any subtilty of reason whatsoever. But there are inferior degrees of assurance concerning things; as, the testimony and authority of persons every way credible. And this assurance we have in this state concerning the things of another world. We believe, with great reason, that we have the testimony of God concerning them; which is the highest kind of evidence in itself. And we have all the reasonable assurance we can desire, that God hath testified these things: and this is the utmost assurance which things future and at a distance are capable of.

But yet it is an unreasonable obstinacy to deny, that this falls very much short of that degree of assurance which those persons have concerning these things, who are now in the other world, and have the sense and experience of these things. And this is not only intimated here in the text, in the opposition of faith and sight, but is plainly expressed in other texts of scripture, 1 Cor. xiii. 9. 10. *We know now but in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.* That degree of knowledge and assurance which we have in this life is very imperfect, in comparison to what we shall have hereafter. And ℣ 12. *We now see as through a glass, darkly,* ἐν αἰνίγματι, *as in a riddle,* in which there is always a great deal of obscurity. All which expressions are certainly intended by way of abatement and diminution to the certainty of faith; because it is plain, that by *that which is in part,* or *imperfect,* the Apostle means faith and hope; which, he tells us, *shall cease, when that which is perfect,* meaning vision and sight, *is come.* We see likewise in experience, that the faith and hope of the best Christians in this life is accompanied with doubting concerning these things; and all doubting is a degree of uncertainty: but those blessed souls who are entered upon the possession of glory and happiness, and those miserable wretches who lie groning

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groning under the wrath of God, and the ſeverity of his juſtice, cannot poſſibly, if they would, have any doubt concerning the truth and reality of theſe things.

But however contentious men may diſpute againſt common ſenſe, this is ſo plain a truth, that I will not labour in the farther proof of it. Nor indeed is it reaſonable, while we are in this ſtate, to expect that degree of aſſurance concerning the rewards and puniſhments of another life, which the ſight and ſenſible experience of them would give us; and that upon theſe two accounts:

1. Becauſe our preſent ſtate will not admit it; and,

2. If it would, it is not reaſonable we ſhould have it.

1. Our preſent ſtate will not admit it: for while we are in this world, it is not poſſible we ſhould have that ſenſible experiment and trial how things are in the other. The things of the other world are remote from us, and far out of ſight; and we cannot have any experimental knowledge of them, till we ourſelves enter into that ſtate. Thoſe who are already paſſed into it, know how things are: thoſe happy ſouls who live in the reviving preſence of God, and are poſſeſſed of thoſe joys which we cannot now conceive, underſtand theſe things in another manner, and have a more perfect aſſurance concerning them, than it is poſſible for any man to have in this world; and thoſe wretched and miſerable ſpirits, who feel the vengeance of God, and are plunged into the horrors of eternal darkneſs, do believe upon irreſiſtible evidence, and have other kind of convictions of the reality of that ſtate, and the inſupportable miſery of it, than any man is capable of in this world.

2. If our preſent ſtate would admit of this high degree of aſſurance, it is not fit and reaſonable that we ſhould have it. Such an overpowering evidence would quite take away the virtue of faith, and much leſſen that of obedience. Put the caſe, that every man, ſome conſiderable time before his departure out of this life, were permitted to viſit the other world, to aſſure him how things are there; to view the manſions of the bleſſed, and to ſurvey the dark and lothſome priſons of the damned; to hear the lamentable outcries of miſerable and deſpairing ſouls, and to ſee the inconceivable anguiſh

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guish and torments they are in: after this, what virtue would it be in any man to believe these things? He that had been there and seen them, could not disbelieve them, if he would. Faith in this case would not be virtue, but necessity; and therefore it is observable, that our Saviour doth not pronounce them blessed who believed his resurrection upon the forcible evidence of their own senses; *but blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* They might be happy in the effects of that faith; but there is no praise, no reward belongs to that faith which is wrought in man by so violent and irresistible an evidence. It was the great commendation of Abraham's faith, that *against hope he believed in hope*: he believed the promise of God concerning a thing in itself very improbable. But it is no commendation at all, to believe the things which we have seen; because they admit of no manner of dispute. No objection can be offered to shake our assent, unless we will run to the extremity of scepticism: for if we will believe any thing at all, we must yield to the evidence of sense. This does so violently inforce our assent, that there can be no virtue in such a faith.

And as this would take away the virtue of faith, so it would very much lessen that of our obedience. It is hardly to be imagined, that any man who had seen the blessed condition of good men in another world, and been an eye-witness of the intolerable torments of sinners, should ever after be tempted knowingly to do any thing that would deprive him of that happiness, or bring him into *that place of torment.* Such a sight could not chuse but affect a man as long as he lived; and leave such impressions upon his mind, of the indispensable necessity of a holy life, and of the infinite danger of a wicked course, that we might sooner believe that all the men in the world should conspire to kill one another, than that such a man, by consenting to any deliberate act of sin, should wilfully throw himself into those flames. No; his mind would be continually haunted with those furies he had seen tormenting sinners in another world, and the fearful shrieks and outcries of miserable souls would be perpetually ringing in his ears; and the man would have so lively and terrible an imagination of the danger he

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was running himself upon, that no temptation would be strong enough to conquer his fears, and to make him careless of his life and actions, after he had once seen how *fearful a thing it was to fall into the hands of the living God.* So that in this case the reason of mens obedience would be so violent, that the virtue of it must be very little: for what praise is due to any man, not to do those things which none but a perfect madman would do? for certainly that man must be beside himself, that could by any temptation be seduced to live a wicked life, after he had seen the state of good and bad men in the other world; the glorious rewards of holiness and virtue, and the dismal event of a vitious and sinful course. God hath designed this life for the trial of our virtue, and the exercise of our obedience: but there would hardly be any place for this, if there were a free and easy passage for us into the other world, to see the true state of things there. What argument would it be of any man's virtue, to forbear sinning after he had been in hell, and seen the miserable end of sinners? But I proceed to the

III. Third and last observation, namely, That notwithstanding faith be an inferior degree of assent; yet it is a principle of sufficient force and power to govern our lives: *We walk by faith.* Now, that the belief of any thing may have its effect upon us, it is requisite that we be satisfied of these two things.

1. Of the certainty; and, 2. of the great concernment of the thing. For if the thing be altogether uncertain, it will not move us at all: we shall do nothing towards the obtaining of it, if it be good; nor for the avoiding and preventing of it, if it be evil. And if we are certain of the thing, yet if we apprehend it to be of no great moment and concernment, we shall be apt to slight it, as not worth our regard. But the rewards and punishments of another world, which the gospel propounds to our faith, are fitted to work upon our minds, both upon account of the certainty and concernment of them. For,

1. We have sufficient assurance of the truth of these things; as much as we are well capable of, in this state, concerning things future and at a distance. We have the

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dictates of our reason arguing us into this persuasion, from the consideration of the justice of the divine providence, and from the promiscuous and unequal administration of things in this world; from whence wise men in all ages have been apt to conclude, that there will be another state of things after this life, wherein rewards and punishments shall be equally distributed. We have the general consent of mankind in this matter. And, to assure us that these reasonings are true, we have a most credible revelation of these things; God having sent his Son from heaven to declare it to us, and given us a sensible demonstration of the thing in his resurrection from the dead, and his visible ascension into heaven. So that there is no kind of evidence wanting that the thing is capable of, but only our own sense and experience of these things; of which we are not capable in this present state. And there is no objection against all this, but what will bring all things into uncertainty which do not come under our senses, and which we ourselves have not seen.

Nor is there any considerable interest to hinder men from the belief of these things, or to make them hesitate about them. For as for the other world, if at last there should prove to be no such thing, our condition after death will be the same with the condition of those who disbelieve these things; because all will be extinguished by death. But if things fall out otherwise, as most undoubtedly they will, and our souls after this life do pass into a state of everlasting happiness or misery, then our great interest plainly lies in preparing ourselves for this state: and there is no other way to secure the great concernments of another world, but by believing those things to be true, and governing all the actions of our lives by this belief. And as for the interests of this life, they are but short and transitory, and consequently of no consideration in comparison of the things which are eternal; and yet, as I have often told you, setting aside the case of persecution for religion, there is no real interest of this world, but it may be as well promoted, and pursued to as great advantage, nay, usually to a far greater, by him that believes these things, and lives accordingly, than by any other person: for the belief of the

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the rewards and punishments of another world, is the greatest motive and encouragement to virtue. And as all vice is naturally attended with some temporal inconvenience; so the practice of all Christian virtues doth, in its own nature, tend both to the welfare of particular persons, and to the peace and prosperity of mankind.

But that which ought to weigh very much with us, is, that we have abundantly more assurance of the recompence of another world, than we have of many things in this world, which yet have a greater influence upon our actions, and govern the lives of the most prudent and considerate men. Men generally hazard their lives and estates upon terms of greater uncertainty than the assurance which we have of another world. Men venture to take physick upon probable grounds of the integrity and skill of their physician; and yet the want of either of these may hazard their lives. And men take physick upon greater odds; for it certainly causeth pain and sickness, and doth but uncertainly procure and recover health: the patient is sure to be made sick, but not certain to be made well: and yet the danger of being worse, if not of dying, on the one hand, and the hope of success and recovery on the other, make this hazard and trouble reasonable. Men venture their whole estates to places which they never saw; and that there are such places, they have only the concurrent testimony and agreement of men; nay, perhaps have only spoken with them that have spoken with those that have been there. No merchant ever insisted upon the evidence of a miracle to be wrought, to satisfy him that there were such places as the East and West Indies, before he would venture to trade thither: and yet this assurance God hath been pleased to give the world of a state beyond the grave, and of a blessed immortality in another life.

Now, what can be the reason that so slender evidence, so small a degree of assurance, will serve to encourage men to seek after the things of this world with great care and industry; and yet a great deal more will not suffice to put them effectually upon looking after the great concernments of another world, which are infinitely more considerable? No other reason of this can be given, but that men are partial in their affections to-

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wards these things. It is plain they have not the same love for God and religion, which they have for this world and the advantages of it; and therefore it is, that a less degree of assurance will engage them to seek after the one, than the other: and yet the reason is much stronger on the other side; for the greater the benefit and good is which is offered to us, we should be the more eager to seek after it, and should be content to venture upon less probability. Upon excessive odds, a man would venture upon very small hopes: for a mighty advantage, a man would be content to run a great hazard of his labour and pains upon little assurance. Where a man's life is concerned, every suspicion of danger will make a man careful to avoid it. And will nothing affright men from hell, unless God carry them thither, and shew them the place of torments, and the flames of that fire which shall *never be quenched?*

I do not speak this, as if these things had not abundant evidence; I have shewn that they have; but to convince men how unreasonable and cruelly partial they are about the concernments of their souls, and their eternal happiness.

2. Supposing these things to be real and certain, they are of infinite concernment to us. For what can concern us more, than that eternal and unchangeable state, in which we must be fixed and abide for ever? If so vast a concern will not move us, and have no influence upon the government of our lives and actions, we do not deserve the name of reasonable creatures. What consideration can be set before men, who are not touched with the sense of so great an interest, as that of our happy or miserable being to all eternity? Can we be so solicitous and careful about the concernment of a few days; and is it nothing to us what becomes of us for ever? Are we so tenderly concerned to avoid poverty and disgrace, persecution and suffering in this world; and shall we not much more *flee from the wrath which is to come*, and endeavour to *escape the damnation of hell?* Are the slight and transitory enjoyments of this world worth so much thought and care; and is an eternal inheritance in the heavens not worth the looking after? As there is no proportion betwixt the things which are temporal, and

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and the things which are eternal; so we ought in all reason to be infinitely more concerned for the one than for the other.

The proper inference from all this discourse is, that we would endeavour to strengthen in ourselves this great principle of a Christian life, the belief of another world, by representing to ourselves all those arguments and considerations which may confirm us in this persuasion. The more reasonable our faith is, and the surer grounds it is built upon, the more firm it will abide, when it comes to the trial, against all the impressions of temptations, and assaults of persecution. If our faith of another world be only a strong imagination of these things, *so soon as tribulation ariseth, it will wither; because it hath no root in itself.* Upon this account, the Apostle so often exhorts Christians to endeavour to *be established in the truth, to be rooted and grounded in the faith,* that when persecution comes, they may *continue stedfast and unmoveable.* This firmness of our belief will have a great influence upon our lives: if we be *stedfast and unmoveable* in our persuasion of these things, we shall be *abundant in the work of the Lord.* The Apostle joins these together, 1 Cor. xv. 58. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Stedfast and unmoveable,* in what? In the belief of a blessed resurrection; which the more firmly any man believes, the more active and industrious will he be in the work and service of God.

And that our faith may have a constant and powerful influence upon our lives, we should frequently revolve in our minds the thoughts of another world, and of that vast eternity which we shall shortly launch into. The great disadvantage of the arguments fetched from another world is this, that these things are at a distance from us, and not sensible to us, and therefore we are not apt to be so affected with them; present and sensible things weigh down all other considerations. And therefore, to balance this disadvantage, we should often have these thoughts in our minds, and inculcate upon ourselves the certainty of these things, and the infinite

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concernment of them; we ſhould reaſon thus with ourſelves: If theſe things be true, and will certainly be, why ſhould they not be to me, as if they were actually preſent? why ſhould not I always live, as if heaven were open to my view, and I *ſaw Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God*, with crowns of glory in his hands, ready to be ſet upon the heads of all thoſe who continue faithful and obedient to him? and why ſhould I not be as much afraid to commit any ſin, as if *hell were naked before me*, and I ſaw the aſtoniſhing miſeries of the damned?

Thus we ſhould, by frequent meditation, repreſent theſe great things to ourſelves, and bring them nearer to our minds, and oppoſe to the preſent temptations of ſenſe, the great and endleſs happineſs and miſery of the other world. And if we would but thus exerciſe ourſelves about *the things which are not ſeen*, and make eternity familiar to ourſelves, by a frequent meditation of it, we ſhould be very little moved with preſent and ſenſible things; we ſhould *walk* and *live by faith*, as the men of the world do by *ſenſe*; and be more ſerious and earneſt in the purſuit of our great and everlaſting intereſt, than they are in the purſuit of ſenſual enjoyments; and ſhould make it the great buſineſs of this preſent and temporal life, to ſecure a future and eternal happineſs.

SERMON LXV.

The danger of apoſtaſy from the true religion.

HEB. x. 38.

But if any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him.

THE great deſign of this epiſtle (whoever was the author of it, which I ſhall not now inquire into) is plainly this, to confirm the Jews who were but newly converted to Chriſtianity, in the ſtedfaſt profeſſion

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feſſion of that faith which they had embraced; and to arm them againſt that temptation which Chriſtians were then expoſed to, *viz.* the fierce and cruel perſecutions which threatened thoſe of that profeſſion.

And to this purpoſe he repreſents to them the excellency of that religion above any other former revelation that God had made of himſelf to the world, both in reſpect of the author and revealer of it, who was the Son of God; and in reſpect of the revelation itſelf; which as it contains better and more perfect directions for a good life, ſo likewiſe more powerful and effectual motives thereto, better promiſes, and more terrible threatenings, than were annexed to the obſervation of the Jewiſh law, or clearly and certainly diſcoverable by the light of nature. From theſe conſiderations, he earneſtly perſuades them, all along throughout this epiſtle, to continue conſtant in the profeſſion of this faith, and not to ſuffer themſelves to be frighted out of it by the terror of perſecution: chap. ii. 1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earneſt heed to the things which we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip;* and chap. iv. 1. *Let us therefore fear, leſt a promiſe being left us of entering into his reſt, any of you ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it;* and ℣ 23. of this chapter, *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering:* and to encourage them to conſtancy, he ſets before them the glorious rewards and recompences of the goſpel, ℣ 35. *Caſt not away therefore your confidence,* τὴν παῤῥησίαν ὑμῶν, *your free and open profeſſion of Chriſtianity, which hath great recompence of reward.*

And then, on the other hand, to deter them from apoſtaſy from this profeſſion, he repreſents to them the horrible danger of it here in the text, *But if any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him.*

I ſhall briefly explain the words, and then proſecute that which I mainly intend in them. *If any man draw back,* Ἐὰν ὑποστείληται: theſe words, with the foregoing, are cited out of the Prophet Habakkuk, chap. ii. 3. 4. and they are cited by the Apoſtle, according to the tranſlation of the LXX, which differs ſomewhat from the Hebrew; and the difference ariſeth from the various readings of the Hebrew word, which is rendered by the LXX, *to draw back;* but, by the change of a letter, ſignifies

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signifies *to be lifted up*, as we render it in the Prophet: but however that be, the Apostle follows the translation of the LXX, and accommodates it to his purpose. Ἐὰν ὑποστείληται, *if any man draw back*; the word signifies *to keep back, to withdraw, to sneak and slink away out of fear, to fail or faint* in any enterprize. And thus this word is rendered in the New Testament: Acts xx. 20. οὐδὲν ὑπεστειλάμην, *I did not with-hold* or *keep back any thing that was profitable for you*: and so it is said of St. Peter, Gal. ii. 12. ὑπέστελλεν ἑαυτὸν, *he slunk away*, or *withdrew himself, fearing them of the circumcision*; and the Hebrew word which is here rendered by the LXX, *to draw back*, is rendered elsewhere ἐκλείπειν, which is *to fail*, or *faint*. From all which it appears, that by *drawing back* the Apostle here means, mens quitting their profession of Christianity, and slinking out of it, for fear of suffering for it.

My soul shall have no pleasure in him: these words are plainly a μείωσις, and less is said than is meant; for the meaning is, that God will be extremely displeased with them, and punish them very severely. The like figure to this you have, Psal. v. 4. *Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness*; which in the very next verse is explained by his hatred and detestation of those who are guilty of it, *Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity*. So that the plain sense of the words is this, That apostasy from the profession of God's true religion, is a thing highly provoking to him, and will be most severely punished by him.

In speaking to this argument, I shall consider these four things.

1. The nature of this sin of apostasy from religion.
2. The several steps and degrees of it.
3. The heinousness of it.
4. The great danger of it, and the terrible punishment it exposeth men to. And when I have spoken to these, I shall conclude all with a short exhortation, to *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*.

I. We will consider the nature of this sin of apostasy from religion. And it consists in forsaking or renouncing the profession of religion, whether it be by an open declaration in words, or a virtual declaration of it by our actions:

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actions: for it comes all to one in the sight of God; and the different manner of doing it, does not alter the nature of the thing. He indeed that renounceth religion by an open declaration in words, offers the greatest and boldest defiance to it; but he is likewise an apostate, who silently withdraws himself from the profession of it, who quits it for his interest, or for fear disowns it, and sneaks out of the profession of it, and forsakes the communion of those who own it. Thus Demas was an apostate, in quitting Christianity for some worldly interest: *Demas hath forsaken* us, *having loved this present world*, saith St. Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 10.

And those whom our Saviour describes, Matth. xiii. 20. 21. *who received the word into stony ground*, were apostates out of fear: *They heard the word, and with joy received it; but having no root in themselves, they endured but for a while; and when tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the word, presently they fall off.*

And there is likewise a partial apostasy from Christianity, when some fundamental article of it is denied, whereby, in effect, and by consequence, the whole Christian faith is overthrown. Of this Hymeneus and Philetus were guilty, of whom the Apostle says, that they *erred concerning the truth, saying, that the resurrection was past already; and thereby overthrew the faith of some*, 2 Tim. ii. 17. 18.; that is, they turned the resurrection into an allegory, and did thereby really destroy a most fundamental article of the Christian religion.

So that, to make a man an apostate, it is not necessary that a man should solemnly renounce his baptism, and declare Christianity to be false: there are several other ways whereby a man may bring himself under this guilt; as, by a silent quitting of his religion, and withdrawing himself from the communion of all that profess it; by denying an essential doctrine of Christianity, by undermining the great end and design of it; by teaching doctrines which directly tend to encourage men in impenitence, and a wicked course of life; nay, to authorise all manner of impiety and vice, in telling men that whatever they do, they cannot sin: for which the primitive Christians did look upon the Gnosticks as no better than apostates from Christianity; and though they retained

ed the name of Chriſtians, yet not to be truly and really ſo. And there is likewiſe a partial apoſtaſy from the Chriſtian religion, of which I ſhall ſpeak under the

II. Second head I propoſed; which was, to conſider the ſeveral ſorts and degrees of apoſtaſy. The higheſt of all is, the renouncing and forſaking of Chriſtianity, or of ſome eſſential part of it, which is a virtual apoſtaſy from it. But there are ſeveral tendencies towards this, which they who are guilty of, are in ſome degree guilty of this ſin: As,

1. Indifferency in religion, and want of all ſort of concernment for it; when a man, though he never quitted his religion, yet is ſo little concerned for it, that a very ſmall occaſion or temptation would make him do it: he is contented to be reckoned in the number of thoſe who profeſs it, ſo long as it is the faſhion, and he finds no great inconvenience by it; but is ſo indifferent in his mind about it, (like Gallio, *who minded none of thoſe things*), that he can turn himſelf into any other ſhape, when his intereſt requires it: ſo that, though he never actually deſerted it, yet he is a kind of apoſtate in the preparation and diſpoſition of his mind. And to ſuch perſons, that title which Solomon gives to ſome, may fitly enough be applied, they are *backſliders in heart*.

2. Another tendency to this ſin, and a great degree of it, is, withdrawing from the publick marks and teſtimonies of the profeſſion of religion, by forſaking the aſſemblies of Chriſtians for the worſhip and ſervice of God; to withdraw ourſelves from thoſe, for fear of danger or ſuffering, is a kind of denial of our religion. And this was the caſe of ſome in the Apoſtles time: when perſecution grew hot, and the open profeſſion of Chriſtianity dangerous; to avoid this danger, many appeared not in the aſſemblies of Chriſtians, for fear of being obſerved, and brought into trouble for it. This the Apoſtle taxeth ſome for in this chapter, and ſpeaketh of it as a letting go our profeſſion, and a kind of deſerting of Chriſtianity, ℣ 23. 25. *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; not forſaking the aſſembling of ourſelves together, as the manner of ſome is.* He doth not ſay, they had quitted their profeſſion; but they had but a looſe hold of it, and were ſilently ſtealing away from it.

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3. A light temper of mind, which eaſily receives impreſſions from thoſe who lie in wait to deceive and ſeduce men from the truth. When men are not well rooted and eſtabliſhed in religion, they are apt *to be inveigled by the crafty inſinuations of ſeducers*, to *be moved with every wind of doctrine*, and to *be eaſily ſhaken in mind*, by every trifling piece of ſophiſtry that is confidently obtruded upon them for a weighty argument.

Now, this is a temper of mind which diſpoſeth men to apoſtaſy, and renders them an eaſy prey to every one that takes a pleaſure and pride in making proſelytes. It is true indeed, a man ſhould always have a mind ready to entertain truth, when it is fairly propoſed to him: but the main things of religion are ſo plainly revealed, and lie ſo obvious to every ordinary capacity, that every man may diſcern them; and when he hath once entertained them, ought to be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable in them, and not ſuffer himſelf to be whiffled out of them by an inſignificant noiſe about the infallibility of a viſible church; much leſs ought he to be moved by any man's uncharitableneſs and poſitiveneſs, in damning all that are not of his mind.

There are ſome things ſo very plain, not only in ſcripture, but to the common reaſon of mankind, that no ſubtilty of diſcourſe, no pretended authority, or even infallibility of any church, ought to ſtagger us in the leaſt about them: as, that we ought not, or cannot believe any thing in direct contradiction to ſenſe and reaſon; that the people ought to read and ſtudy the holy ſcriptures, and to ſerve God, and pray to him, in a language which they underſtand; that they ought to receive the ſacrament as our Saviour inſtituted and appointed it, that is, in both kinds; that it can neither be our duty, nor lawful, to do that which God hath forbidden; as he hath done the worſhip of images in the ſecond commandment, as plainly as words can do it. Upon any one of theſe points, a man would fix his foot, and ſtand alone againſt the whole world.

4. Another degree of apoſtaſy is, a departure from the purity of the Chriſtian doctrine and worſhip, in a groſs and notorious manner. This is a partial, though not a total apoſtaſy from the Chriſtian religion; and there have been,

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been, and are ſtill ſome in the world, who are juſtly charged with this degree of apoſtaſy from religion; namely, ſuch as, though they retain and profeſs the belief of all the articles of the Chriſtian faith, and worſhip *the only true God*, and *him whom he hath ſent, Jeſus Chriſt*; yet have greatly perverted the Chriſtian religion, by ſuperinducing and adding new articles of faith, and groſs corruptions and ſuperſtitions in worſhip, and impoſing upon men the belief and practice of theſe as neceſſary to ſalvation. And St. Paul is my warrant for this cenſure, who chargeth thoſe who added to the Chriſtian religion the neceſſity of circumciſion, and obſerving the law of Moſes, and thereby perverted the goſpel of Chriſt, as guilty in ſome degree of apoſtaſy from Chriſtianity; for he calls it *preaching another goſpel*, Gal. i. 7. 8. *There be ſome that trouble you, and would pervert the goſpel of Chriſt. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other goſpel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed.* And thoſe who were ſeduced by theſe teachers, he chargeth them with having in ſome ſort quitted the goſpel of Chriſt, and embraced another goſpel, ℣ 6. *I marvel, that ye are ſo ſoon removed from him that called you into the grace of Chriſt, unto another goſpel.* So that they who thus pervert and corrupt the Chriſtian doctrine or worſhip, are plainly guilty of a partial apoſtaſy from Chriſtianity; and they who quit the purity of the Chriſtian doctrine and worſhip, and go over to the communion of thoſe who have thus perverted Chriſtianity, are in a moſt dangerous ſtate, and, in the judgment of St. Paul, are in ſome ſort *removed unto another goſpel*. I ſhall now proceed, in the

III. Third place, to conſider the heinouſneſs of this ſin. And it will appear to be very heinous, if we conſider what an affront it is to God, and how great a contempt of him. When God hath revealed his will to mankind, and ſent no leſs a perſon than his own Son out of his own boſom to do it, and hath given ſuch teſtimonies to him from heaven, by *ſigns and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt*; when he hath tranſmitted down to us ſo faithful a record of this revelation, and of the miracles wrought to confirm it, in the books of the holy ſcriptures; and when we ourſelves have

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have so often declared our firm belief of this revelation: yet, after all this, to fall from it, and deny it, or any part of it, or to embrace doctrines and practices plainly contrary to it; this certainly cannot be done without the greatest affront and contempt of the testimony of God himself; for it is in effect, and by interpretation, to declare, that either we do not believe what God says, or that we do not fear what he can do. So St. John tells us, 1 epist. v. 10. *He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record which God hath given of his Son.*

And all along in this epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle sets himself to aggravate this sin, calling it *an evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the living God,* chap. iii. 12. And he frequently calls it so κατ' ἐξοχήν, and by way of eminency, as being of all sins the greatest and most heinous, chap. x. 26. *If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth.* That the Apostle here speaks of the sin of apostasy, is plain from the whole scope of his discourse: for having exhorted them before, ℣ 23. to *hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering; not forsaking the assembling of themselves together;* he immediately adds, *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth;* that is, if we fall off from Christianity after we have embraced it. And chap. xii. 1. *Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us;* that is, the great sin of apostasy from religion, to which they were then so strongly tempted by that fierce persecution which attended it: and therefore he adds, *Let us run with patience the race which is set before us;* that is, let us arm ourselves with patience against the sufferings we are like to meet with in our Christian course. To oppose the truth, and resist the clear evidence of it, is a great sin, and men are justly condemned for it; John iii. 19. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light:* but to desert the truth after we have been convinced of it, to fall off from the profession of it after we have embraced it, is a much greater sin. Opposition to the truth may proceed in a great measure from ignorance and prejudice, which is a great extenuation; and therefore St. Paul tells us, that

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after all his violent perſecution of Chriſtianity, he *found mercy, becauſe he did it ignorantly, and in unbelief.* To revolt from the truth, after we have made profeſſion of it; *after we have known the way of righteouſneſs, to turn from the holy commandment;* this is the great aggravation. The Apoſtle makes wilfulneſs an uſual ingredient in the ſin of apoſtaſy: *If we ſin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth.*

And as this ſin is one of the greateſt affronts to God, ſo it is the higheſt and moſt effectual diſparagement of religion: for it is not ſo much conſidered what the enemies of religion ſpeak againſt it, becauſe *they ſpeak evil of the things which they know not,* and of which they have had no trial and experience; but he that falls off from religion after he hath made profeſſion of it, declares to the world, that he hath tried it, and diſlikes it, and pretends to leave it, becauſe he hath not found that truth and goodneſs in it which he expected, and, upon long experience of it, ſees reaſon to prefer another religion before it. So that nothing can be more deſpiteful to religion than this, and more likely to bring it into contempt; and therefore the Apoſtle (℣ 29. of this chapter) calls it a *trampling under foot the Son of God, and making the blood of the covenant a profane thing, and offering deſpite to the Spirit of grace:* for we cannot put a greater ſcorn upon the Son of God, who revealed this doctrine to the world; nor upon his blood, which was ſhed to confirm and ſeal the truth of it; and upon the Holy Ghoſt, who came down in miraculous gifts to give teſtimony to it; than, notwithſtanding all this, to renounce this doctrine, and to forſake this religion. But we ſhall yet farther ſee the heinouſneſs of this ſin, in the terrible puniſhment it expoſeth men to; which was the

IV. Fourth and laſt thing I propoſed to conſider. And this is repreſented to us in a moſt terrible manner, not only in this epiſtle, but in other places of ſcripture. This ſin is placed in the higheſt rank of pardonable ſins, and next to the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which our Saviour declares to be abſolutely unpardonable. And indeed the ſcripture ſpeaks very doubtfully of the pardonableneſs of this ſin, as being near a-kin to that againſt the Holy Ghoſt, being ſaid to be an *offering deſpite*

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to the Spirit of grace. In the 6th chapter of this epiſtle, ℣ 4. 5. 6. the Apoſtle ſpeaks, in a very ſevere manner, concerning the ſtate of thoſe who had apoſtatized from Chriſtianity; after the ſolemn profeſſion of it in baptiſm: *It is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened,* (that is, baptized), *and have taſted of the heavenly gift,* (that is, regeneration), *and were made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,* (that is, have been inſtructed in the Chriſtian religion, and endued with the miraculous powers of the goſpel-age; for the Jews uſed to call the age of the Meſſias, *ſeculum futurum,* or "the world to "come"); *it is impoſſible for thoſe to be renewed again unto repentance:* where the leaſt we can underſtand by *impoſſible,* is, that it is extremely difficult; for ſo the word *impoſſible* is ſometimes uſed; as when our Saviour ſays, *It is impoſſible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And, chap. x. 26. the Apoſtle, ſpeaking of the ſame thing, ſays, *If we ſin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more ſacrifice for ſins;* that is, they who renounce Chriſtianity, ſince they reject the only way of expiation, *there remains no more ſacrifice for their ſins.*

St. Peter likewiſe expreſſeth himſelf very ſeverely concerning this ſort of perſons, 2 epiſt. ii. 20. *For if after they have eſcaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt,* (that is, after they have been brought from Heatheniſm to Chriſtianity), *they are again intangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning.* He ſeems loth to ſay how ſad the condition of ſuch perſons is; but this he tells them, that it is much worſe than when they were Heathens before; and he gives the reaſon, ℣ 21. *For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.* And St. John calls this ſin of apoſtaſy, *the ſin unto death:* and tho' he do not forbid Chriſtians to pray for them that are guilty of it; yet he will not ſay, that they ſhould pray for them, 1 epiſt. v. 16. *If any man ſee his brother ſin a ſin which is not unto death, he ſhall aſk, and he ſhall give him life for them that ſin not unto death. There*

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is a sin unto death: I do not say, that he shall pray for it. Now, that by this *sin unto death* the Apostle means apostasy from the Christian religion to idolatry, is most probable from what follows, ℣ 18. *We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not,* (that is, this sin unto death); *but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not;* (that is, he is preserved from idolatry, unto which the devil had seduced so great a part of mankind). *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world* ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται, *is under the dominion of that wicked one,* (*viz.* the devil, whom the scripture elsewhere calls *the god of this world*). *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true;* (that is, hath brought us from the worship of false gods to the knowledge and worship of the true God). And then he concludes, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols;* which caution hath no manner of dependence upon what went before, unless we understand *the sin unto death* in this sense. And it is the more probable, that it is so to be understood, because apostasy is so often in this epistle to the Hebrews called *the sin,* by way of eminency, as it is here, by St. John, *Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not.*

So that, at the very best, the scripture speaks doubtfully of the pardon of this sin; however, that the punishment of it, unrepented of, shall be very dreadful. It seems to be mildly expressed here in the text, *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him:* but it is the more severe, for being expressed so mildly, according to the intention of the figure here used; and therefore, in the next words, this expression of God's taking no pleasure in such persons, is explained by their utter ruin and perdition: *But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition.* And, in several parts of this epistle, there are very severe passages to this purpose: chap. ii. 2. 3. *If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* and chap. x. 26.——31. *If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a*

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certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath troden under foot the Son of God? &c. *For we know him that hath said, Vengeance is mine, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* What can be more severe and terrible than these expressions?

I will mention but one text more, and that is, Rev. xxi. 7. 8. where, in the catalogue of great sinners, those who apostatize from religion out of fear, do lead the van: *He that overcometh, shall inherit all things;* (which is elsewhere in this book expressed by continuing *faithful unto the death*); *He that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. The fearful, and unbelievers, and liars;* that is, they who out of fear relapse into infidelity, and abide not in the truth, shall be reckoned in the first rank of offenders, and be punished accordingly.

And thus I have done with the four things I propounded to speak to, from these words; the nature of apostasy; the several steps and degrees of it; the heinous nature of this sin; the danger of it, and the terrible punishment it exposeth men to.

And is there any need now to exhort men to *hold fast the profession of faith*, when the danger of *drawing back* is so evident, and so terrible? or is there any reason and occasion for it? Certainly there is no great danger amongst us, of mens apostatizing from Christianity, and turning Jews, or Turks, or Heathens? I do not think there is; but yet for all that, we are not free from the danger of apostasy. There is great danger, not of mens apostatizing from one religion to another, but from religion to infidelity and atheism; and of this worst kind of apostasy of all other, I wish the age we live in had not afforded us too many instances. It is greatly to be

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lamented, that among thoſe who have profeſſed Chriſtianity, any ſhould be found, that ſhould make it their endeavour to undermine the great principles of all religion; the belief of a God, and his providence; and of the immortality of the ſouls of men; and a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments after this life; and to bring the moſt ſerious matters in the world into contempt, and to turn them into jeſt and raillery. This is not only a renouncing of Chriſtianity, the religion which God hath revealed; but even of the religion which is born with us, and the principles and notions which God hath planted in every man's mind: this is an impiety of the firſt magnitude, and not to be mentioned without grief and horror; and this, it is to be feared, hath had a great hand in thoſe great calamities which our eyes have ſeen; and I pray God it do not draw down ſtill more and greater judgments upon this nation. But I hope there are none here that need to be cautioned againſt this horrible impiety, and higheſt degree of apoſtaſy from the living God. That which people are much more in danger of, is apoſtaſy from the purity of the Chriſtian doctrine and worſhip, ſo happily recovered by a regular reformation, and eſtabliſhed amongſt us by all the authority that laws, both eccleſiaſtical and civil, can give it; and which, in truth, is no other than the ancient and primitive Chriſtianity; I ſay, a defection from this, to thoſe groſs errors and ſuperſtitions which the reformation had pared off, and freed us from. I do not ſay, that this is a total apoſtaſy from Chriſtianity; but it is a partial apoſtaſy and defection, and a very dangerous one; and that thoſe who *after that they have received the knowledge of the truth*, fall off from it into thoſe errors and corruptions, are highly guilty before God, and their condition certainly worſe, and more dangerous, than of thoſe who are brought up in thoſe errors and ſuperſtitions, and never knew better: for there are terrible threatenings in ſcripture againſt thoſe who fall away from the truth, which they once embraced, and were convinced of; *If we ſin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth*, &c. and, *If any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him.*

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God considers every man's advantages and opportunities of knowledge, and their disadvantages likewise; and makes all reasonable allowances for them: and for men to continue in the errors they have been always brought up in, or, which comes much to one, in errors which they were led into by principles early infused into them, before they were in any measure competent judges of those matters; I say, for such persons to continue in those errors, and to oppose and reject the contrary truths, against which, by their education, they have received so strong and violent a prejudice, this may be in a great degree excusable, and find pardon with God, upon a general repentance for all sins, both known and unknown, and cannot be reasonably charged with the guilt of this great sin of apostasy: but not to abide in the truth, after we have entertained and professed it, having sufficient means and advantages of knowing it, hath no excuse.

I would not be rash in condemning particular persons of any society or communion of Christians, provided they be sincerely devout, and just, and sober, to the best of their knowledge; I had much rather leave them to God, whose mercies are great, than to pass an uncharitable censure upon them, as to their eternal state and condition: but the case is far otherwise, where the opportunities of knowledge are afforded to men, and *men love darkness rather than light*; for they who have the means and advantages of *knowing their master's will*, are answerable to God as if they had known it; because, if they had not been grosly negligent, and wanting to themselves, they might have known it.

And this, I fear, is the case of the generality of those who have been bred up to years of consideration and choice in the reformed religion, and forsake it; because they do it without sufficient reason, and there are invincible objections against it. They do it without sufficient reason; because every one amongst us knows, or may know upon very little inquiry, that we hold all the articles of the faith, which are contained in the ancient creeds of the Christian church, and into which all Christians are baptized; that we inculcate upon men the necessity of a good life, and of sincere repentance and perfect

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perfect contrition for our ſins, ſuch as is followed with real reformation and amendment of our lives; and that, without this, no man can be ſaved by any device whatſoever.

Now, what reaſon can any man have to queſtion whether he may be ſaved in that faith which ſaved the firſt Chriſtians, and by believing the twelve articles of the Apoſtles creed, though he cannot ſwallow the twelve articles which are added to it in the creed of Pope Pius IV.? every one of which, beſides many and great corruptions and ſuperſtitions in worſhip, are ſo many and invincible objections againſt the communion of the Roman church; as I could particularly ſhew, if it had not been already done in ſo many learned treatiſes upon this argument. What is there then that ſhould move any reaſonable man to forſake the communion of our church, and to quit the reformed religion?

There are three things chiefly with which they endeavour to amuſe and affright weaker minds.

1. A great noiſe of infallibility, which, they tell us, is ſo excellent a means to determine and put an end to all differences. To which I ſhall at preſent only object this prejudice, That there are not wider and hotter differences among us about any thing whatſoever, than are amongſt them about this admirable means of ending all differences; as, where this infallibility is ſeated, that men may know how to have recourſe to it, for the ending of differences.

2. They endeavour to fright men with the danger of ſchiſm. But every man knows, that the guilt of ſchiſm lies at their door, who impoſe ſinful articles of communion; and not upon them, who, for fear of ſinning againſt God, cannot ſubmit to thoſe articles; which we have done, and ſtill are ready to make good, to be the caſe betwixt us and the church of Rome. But,

3. The terrible engine of all is, their poſitive and confident damning of all that live and die out of the communion of their church. This I have fully ſpoken to upon another occaſion; and therefore ſhall only ſay at preſent, that every man ought to have better thoughts of God, than to believe, that he, who *delighteth not in the death of ſinners*, and *would have all men to be ſaved*, and

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and come to the knowledge of the truth, will confirm the sentence of such uncharitable men, as take upon them to condemn men for those things, for which our Saviour in his gospel condemns no man. And of all things in the world, one would think, that the uncharitableness of any church should be an argument to no man to run into its communion.

I shall conclude with the Apostle's exhortation, 23d & 24th verses of this chapter, *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; and provoke one another unto charity, and to good works; and so much the more, because the day approacheth, in which God will judge* the faith and lives of *men by Jesus Christ, according to his gospel.*

SERMON LXVI.

Of self-denial, and suffering for Christ's sake.

MATTH. xvi. 24.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

The first sermon on this text.

THen said Jesus unto his disciples; that is, upon occasion of his former discourse with them, wherein he had acquainted them with his approaching passion, that he must shortly go up to Jerusalem, and there *suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes*, and at last be put to death by them: *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

If any man will come after me, or *follow me*; that is, if any man will be my disciple, and undertake the profession of my religion; if any man chuse and resolve to be a Christian, he must be so upon these terms: he must *deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*; he must follow me in self-denial and suffering.

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In the handling of these words, I shall do these four things.

1. I shall consider the way and method which our Saviour useth in making proselytes, and gaining men over to his religion. He offers no manner of force and violence to compel them to the profession of his religion; but fairly offers it to their consideration and choice; and tells them plainly upon what terms they must be his disciples: and if they be contented and resolved to submit to these terms, well; if not, it is in vain to follow him any longer; for they *cannot be his disciples.*

2. I shall endeavour to explain this duty of self-denial, expressed in these words, *Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

3. I shall consider the strict and indispensable obligation of it, whenever we are called to it. Without this *we cannot be Christ's disciples: If any man will come after me,* or *be my disciple, let him deny himself.*

4. I shall endeavour to vindicate the reasonableness of this precept of self-denial, and suffering for Christ, which at first appearance may seem to be so very harsh and difficult. And I shall go over these particulars as briefly as I can.

I. We will consider the way and method which our Saviour here useth in making proselytes, and gaining men over to his religion. He offers no manner of force and violence to compel men to the profession of his religion; but fairly proposeth it to their consideration and choice; telling them plainly upon what terms they must be his disciples: if they like them, and are content and resolved to submit to them, well; he is willing to receive them, and own them for his disciples: if not, it is in vain to follow him any longer; for they *cannot be his disciples.* As, on the one hand, he offers them no worldly preferment and advantage to entice them into his religion, and to tempt them outwardly to profess what they do not inwardly believe; so, on the other hand, he does not hale and drag them by force, and awe them by the terrors of torture and death to sign the Christian faith, though most undoubtedly true, and to confess with their mouths, and subscribe with their hands, what they do not believe in their hearts. He did

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did not obtrude his sacraments upon them, and plunge them into the water to baptize them, whether they would or no, and thrust the sacrament of bread into their mouths; as if men might be worthy receivers of that blessed sacrament, whether they receive it willingly or no.

Our blessed Saviour, the author and founder of our religion, made use of none of these ways of violence, so contrary to the nature of man, and of all religion, and especially of Christianity, and fitted only to make men hypocrites, but not converts; he only says, *If any man will be my disciple.* He useth no arguments, but such as are spiritual, and proper to work upon the minds and consciences of men: for as his *kingdom was not of this world*, so neither are the motives and arguments to induce men to be his subjects taken from this world, but from the endless rewards and punishments of another. *The weapons* which he made use of to subdue men to the obedience of faith, were not *carnal*; and yet they were *mighty through God* to conquer the obstinacy and infidelity of men. This great and infallible teacher, who certainly came from God, all that he does, is, to propose his religion to men, with such evidence and such arguments as are proper to convince men of the truth and goodness of it, and to persuade men to embrace it; and he acquaints them likewise with all the worldly disadvantages of it, and the hazards and sufferings that would attend it: and now, if upon full consideration they will make his religion their free choice, and become his disciples, he is willing to receive them; if they will not, he understands the nature of religion better, than to go about to force it upon men, whether they will or no.

II. I shall endeavour to explain this duty or precept of self-denial, expressed in these words, *Let him deny himself, and take up his cross.* These are difficult terms, for a man to *deny himself*, and *take up his own cross*; that is, willingly to submit to all those sufferings which the malice of men may inflict for the sake of Christ and his religion. For this expression of *taking up one's cross*, is an allusion to the Roman custom; which was this, that he that was condemned to be crucified,

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cified, was to take his cross upon his shoulders, and to carry it to the place of execution. This the Jews made our Saviour to do, as we read John xix. 17. till that being ready to faint under it, and lest he should die away before he was nailed to the cross, they compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry it for him, as is declared by the other Evangelists: and yet he tells them, they that *will be his disciples, must follow him, bearing their own cross*; that is, being ready, if God call them to it, to submit to the like sufferings for him and his truth, which he was shortly to undergo for the truth, and for their sakes.

But though these terms seem very hard; yet they are not unreasonable; as I shall shew in the conclusion of this discourse. Some indeed have made them so, by extending this self-denial too far; attending more to the latitude of the words, than to the meaning and scope of our Saviour's discourse: for there is no doubt, but that there are a great many things which may properly enough be called self-denial, which yet our Saviour never intended to oblige Christians to. It is, no doubt, great self-denial, for a man, without any necessity, to deny himself the necessary supports of life; for a man to starve and make away himself: but no man certainly ever imagined, that our Saviour ever intended by this precept to injoin this kind of self-denial.

It is plain then, that there is no reason or necessity to extend this precept of our Saviour concerning self-denial to every thing that may properly enough be called by that name; and therefore this precept must be limited by the plain scope and intendment of our Saviour's discourse. And no man can argue thus: Such a thing is self-denial, therefore our Saviour requires it of his disciples. For our Saviour doth not here require all kinds of self-denial, but limits it by his discourse to one certain kind, beyond which self-denial is no duty by virtue of this text. And therefore, for our clearer understanding of this precept of self-denial, I shall do these two things.

1. Remove some sorts of self-denial, which are instanced in by some as intended in this precept.

2. I shall shew what kind of self-denial that is which our Saviour here intends.

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1. There are several things brought under this precept of self-denial which were never intended by our Saviour. I shall instance in two or three things which are most frequently insisted upon, and some of them by very devout and well-meaning men: as, that in matters of faith we should deny and renounce our own senses and our reason; nay, that we should be content to renounce our own eternal happiness, and be willing to be damned for the glory of God, and the good of our brethren. But all these are so apparently and grosly unreasonable, that it is a wonder that any one should ever take them for instances of that self-denial which our Saviour requires; especially considering, that, in all his discourse of self-denial, he does not so much as glance at any of these instances, or any thing like to them.

1*st*, Some comprehend under self-denial the denying and renouncing our own senses in matters of faith. And if this could be made out to be intended by our Saviour in this precept, we needed not dispute any of the other instances. For he that renounceth the certainty of sense, so as not to believe what he sees, may, after this, renounce and deny any thing. For the evidence of sense is more clear and unquestionable than that of faith; as the scripture frequently intimates; as John xx. 29. where our Saviour reproves Thomas, for refusing to believe his resurrection, upon any less evidence than that of sense: *Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;* which plainly supposeth the evidence of sense to be the highest and clearest degree of evidence. So likewise that of St. Paul, 2 Cor. v. 7. *We walk by faith*, and *not by sight*; where the evidence of faith, as that which is more imperfect and obscure, is opposed to that of sight, as more clear and certain. So that to believe any article of faith, in contradiction to the clear evidence of sense, is contrary to the very nature of assent, which always yields to the greatest and clearest evidence.

Besides that our belief of religion is at last resolved into the certainty of sense: so that by renouncing that, we destroy and undermine the very foundation of our faith. One of the plainest and principal proofs of the being of God, which is the first and fundamental article

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of all religion, relies upon the certainty of sense, namely, the frame of this visible world; by the contemplation whereof we are led to the acknowledgment of the invisible author of it. So St. Paul tells us, Rom. i. 20. that *the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*

And the great external evidence of the Christian religion, I mean miracles, is at last resolved into the certainty of sense, without which we can have no assurance that any miracle was wrought for the confirmation of it.

And the knowledge likewise of the Christian faith is conveyed to us by our senses; the evidence whereof, if it be uncertain, takes away all certainty of faith. *How shall they believe,* (saith St. Paul, Rom. x. 14.), *how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?* and, ℣ 17. *So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* So that to deny and renounce our senses in matters of faith, is to take away the main pillar and foundation of it.

2*dly*, Others, almost with equal absurdity, would comprehend, under our Saviour's precept of self-denial, the denying and renouncing of our reason in matters of faith. And this is self-denial with a witness, for a man to deny his own reason; for it is to deny himself to be a man. This surely is a very great mistake; and though the ground of it may be innocent, yet the consequences of it, and the discourses upon it, are very absurd.

The ground of the mistake is this: Men think they deny their own reason, when they assent to the revelation of God in such things as their own reason could neither have discovered, nor is able to give the reason of: whereas in this case, a man is so far from denying his own reason, that he does that which is most agreeable to it. For what more reasonable, than to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured is revealed to us by God, who can neither be deceived himself, nor deceive us?

But though the ground of this mistake may be innocent, yet the consequences of it are most absurd and dangerous. For if we are to renounce our reason in matters of faith, then are we bound to believe without reason;

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ſon; which no man can do; or, if he could, then faith would be unreaſonable, and infidelity reaſonable. So that this inſtance likewiſe of ſelf-denial, to renounce and deny our own reaſon, as it is no where expreſſed, ſo it cannot reaſonably be thought to be intended by our Saviour in this precept.

3*dly*, Nor doth this precept of ſelf-denial require men to be content to renounce their own eternal happineſs, and to be willing to be damned for the glory of God, and the good of their brethren. If this were the meaning of this precept, we might juſtly ſay, as the diſciples did to our Saviour in another caſe, *This is a hard ſaying, and who can bear it?* The very thought of this is enough to make human nature to tremble at its very foundation. For the deepeſt principle that God hath planted in our nature, is, the deſire of our own preſervation and happineſs; and into this the force of all laws, and the reaſon of all our duty, is at laſt reſolved.

From whence it plainly follows, that it can be no man's duty in any caſe to renounce his own happineſs, and to be content to be for ever miſerable; becauſe if once this be made a duty, there will be no argument left to perſuade any man to it. For the moſt powerful arguments that God ever uſed to perſuade men to any thing, are, the promiſe of eternal happineſs, and the terror of everlaſting torments. But if this were a man's duty, to be content to be miſerable for ever, neither of theſe arguments would be of force ſufficient to perſuade a man to it.

The firſt of theſe, namely, the promiſe of eternal happineſs, could ſignify nothing to him that is to be eternally miſerable; becauſe if he be to be ſo, it is impoſſible that he ſhould ever have the benefit of that promiſe. And the threatening of eternal miſery could be no argument in this caſe; becauſe the duty is juſt as difficult as the argument is powerful; and no man can be moved to ſubmit to any thing that is grievous and terrible, but by ſomething that is more terrible: for if it be not, it is the ſame thing whether he ſubmit to it or not: and then no man can be content to be eternally miſerable only for the fear of being ſo; for this would be for a man to run himſelf upon that very inconvenience

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which he is so much afraid of: and it is madness for a man to die for fear of death. *Quis novus hic furor est, ne moriare, mori?*

By this it plainly appears how unreasonable it is to imagine, that by this precept of self-denial our Saviour should require men to renounce everlasting happiness, and to be content to be miserable for ever, upon any account whatsoever; because this were to suppose, that God hath imposed that upon us as a duty, to oblige us whereto there can be no argument offered that can be powerful enough.

As for the glory of God, which is pretended to be the reason, it is an impossible supposition; because it cannot be for the glory of God, to make a creature for ever miserable, that shall not by his wilful obstinacy and impenitence deserve to be so. But this is only cast in to add weight.

The other reason of the good and salvation of our brethren, is the only consideration for which there is any manner of colour from scripture; and two instances are alledged to this purpose, of two very excellent persons, that seem to have desired this, and to have submitted to it: and therefore it is not so unreasonable as we would make it, that our Saviour should injoin it as a duty. The instances alledged are these. Moses desired of God, that he might be blotted out of the book of life, rather than the people of Israel, whom he had conducted and governed so long, should be destroyed. And, in the New Testament, St. Paul tells us, that *he could wish, that himself were accursed from Christ for his brethren;* so earnest a desire had he of their salvation.

But neither of these instances are of force sufficient to overthrow the reasons of my former discourse: for the desire of Moses amounts only to a submission to a temporal death, that his nation might be saved from a temporal ruin. For the expression of *blotting out of the book of life*, is of the same importance with those phrases so frequently used in the Old Testament, of *blotting out from the face of the earth*, and *blotting out one's name from under heaven;* which signify no more than temporal death and destruction: and then Moses's wish was reasonable and generous, and signifies no more, but that he was willing, if God pleased, to die to save the nation.

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As for St. Paul's wish of *being accursed from Christ*, it is plainly an hyperbolical expression of his great affection to his countrymen the Jews, and his zeal for their salvation; which was so great, that if it had been a thing reasonable and lawful, he could have wished the greatest evil to himself for their sakes: and therefore it is observable, that it is not a positive and absolute wish, but expressed in the usual form of ushering in an hyperbole, *I could wish*; just as we are wont to say, when we would express a thing to the height which is not fit nor intended to be done by us, "I could wish so or so; "I could even afford to do this or that:" which kind of speeches no man takes for a strict and precise declaration of our minds, but for a figurative expression of a great passion.

And thus I have done with the first thing I proposed for the explication of this precept or duty of self-denial; which was, to remove some sorts of self-denial, which by some are frequently instanced in, as intended by our Saviour in this precept. I proceed now to the

2. Second thing I proposed; which is, to declare positively, what that self-denial is which our Saviour here intends. And it is plainly this, and nothing but this: That we should be willing to part with all earthly comforts and conveniences, to quit all our temporal interests and enjoyments, and even life itself, for the sake of Christ and his religion; this our Saviour means *by denying ourselves:* and then, which is much the same with the other, that we should be willing to bear any temporal inconvenience and suffering upon the same account; this is to *take up our cross, and follow him.*

And that this is the full meaning of these two phrases, of *denying ourselves*, and *taking up our cross*, will clearly appear, by considering the particular instances which our Saviour gives of this self-denial, whenever he hath occasion to speak of it; by which you will plainly see, that these expressions amount to no more than I have said. Even here in the text, after our Saviour had told his disciples, that *he that would come after him, must deny himself, and take up his cross;* it follows immediately, *For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it.* You see here,

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that he instanceth in parting with our lives for him, as the highest piece of self-denial which he requires. And he himself elsewhere tells us, that *greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.* Elsewhere he instanceth in quitting our nearest relations for his sake, Luke xiv. 26. 27. *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple: and whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

Which expressions, of *hating father, and mother*, and other relations, *and even life itself*, are not to be understood rigorously, and in an absolute sense, but comparatively: for it is an Hebrew manner of speech, to express that absolutely which is meant only comparatively. And so our Saviour explains himself in a parallel text to this, Matth. x. 37. 38. *He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me; he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* In another place our Saviour instanceth in quitting our estates for his sake, Matth. xix. 29. *Every one that shall forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake.* By all which it appears, that this self-denial which our Saviour here requires of his disciples, is to be extended no farther, than to a readiness and willingness, whenever God shall call us to it, to quit all our temporal interests and enjoyments, and even life itself, the dearest of all other, and to submit to any temporal inconvenience and suffering, for his sake. And thus much for the explication of the precept here in the text. I proceed, in the

III. Third place, to consider the strict and indispensable obligation of this precept of self-denial, and suffering for Christ and his truth, rather than to forsake and renounce them: *If any man will come after me*, or *be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*; that is, Upon these terms he must be my disciple, in this manner he must follow me. And in the text I mentioned before, he declares again, that he that is not ready to quit all his relations, and even life itself, for his sake,

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ſake, *is not worthy of him, and cannot be his diſciple*; and *whoſoever doth not bear his croſs, and come after him, cannot be his diſciple.* So that we cannot be the diſciples of Chriſt, nor be worthy to be called by his name, if we be not ready thus to deny ourſelves for his ſake: and not only ſo, but if, for fear of the croſs, or of any temporal ſufferings, we ſhould renounce and deny him, he threatens to *deny us before his Father which is in heaven, i.e.* to deprive us of eternal life, and to ſentence us to everlaſting miſery: Matth. x. 32. 33. *Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me before men, him will I confeſs alſo before my Father which is in heaven. But whoſoever ſhall deny me before men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which is in heaven*; and Mark viii. 38. *Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels*; that is, when he cometh to judge the world, they ſhall not be able to ſtand in that judgment: for that by his being *aſhamed of them*, is meant, that they ſhall be condemned by him, is plain from what goes before, ℣ 36. 37. *What ſhall it profit a man, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* and then it follows, *Whoſoever therefore ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words.*

But becauſe ſome have had the confidence to tell the world, that our Saviour doth not require thus much of Chriſtians, but all that he obligeth us to, is to believe in him in our hearts, but not to make any outward profeſſion of his religion, when the magiſtrate forbids it, and we are in danger of ſuffering for it; I ſhall therefore briefly examine what is pretended for ſo ſtrange an aſſertion, and ſo directly contrary to the whole tenor of the goſpel, and to the expreſs words of our Saviour.

The author of the book called *the Leviathan* tells us, that we are not only not bound to confeſs Chriſt, but we are obliged to deny him, in caſe the magiſtrate require us ſo to do. His words are theſe: "What if "the ſovereign forbid us to believe in Chriſt?" he anſwers, "Such forbidding is of no effect, becauſe belief "and unbelief never follow mens commands. But "what (ſays he) if we be commanded by our lawful "prince to ſay with our tongues we believe not, muſt "we

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" we obey such commands?" To this he answers, " That profession with the tongue is but an external " thing, and no more than any other gesture, whereby " we signify our obedience, and wherein a Christian, " holding firmly in his heart the faith of Christ, hath the " same liberty which the Prophet Elisha allowed to Na- " aman. But what then (says he) shall I answer to our " Saviour, saying, *Whosoever denieth me before men, him* " *will I deny before my Father which is in heaven?*" His answer is, " This we may say, that whatsoever a subject " is compelled to, in obedience to his sovereign, and " does it not in order to his own mind, but the law of " his country, the action is not his, but his sovereign's; " nor is it he that in this case denies Christ before men, " but his governor, and the laws of his country."

But can any man that in good earnest pays any degree of reverence to our blessed Saviour and his religion, think to baffle such plain words by so frivolous an answer? There is no man doubts, but if the magistrate should command men to deny Christ, he would be guilty of a great sin in so doing: but if *we must obey God rather than men*, and every man must *give an account of himself to God*; how will this excuse him that denies Christ, or breaks any other commandment of God, upon the command of the magistrate? And to put the matter out of all doubt, that our Saviour forbids all that will be his disciples, upon pain of damnation, to deny him, though the magistrate should command them to do so, it is very observable, that in that very place where he speaks of confessing or denying him before men, he puts this very case of their being brought before kings and governors for confessing him, Matth. x. 17. 18. *Beware* (says he) *of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.* But what testimony would this be against them, if Christians were bound to deny Christ at their command? But our Saviour goes on, and tells them how they ought to demean themselves, when they were brought before kings and governors, ℣ 19. *But when they shall deliver you up, take ye no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that very*

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very hour what ye ſhall ſpeak. But what need of any ſuch extraordinary aſſiſtance in the caſe, if they had nothing to do but to deny him, when they were required by the magiſtrate to do it? And then, proceeding in the ſame diſcourſe, he bids them, ℣ 28. *not to fear them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do*; that is, not to deny him, for fear of any temporal puniſhment or ſuffering the magiſtrate could inflict upon them; *but to fear* and obey *him who can deſtroy body and ſoul in hell.* And upon this diſcourſe our Saviour concludes, ℣ 32. 33. *Whoſoever therefore ſhall confeſs me before men, him will I confeſs alſo before my Father which is in heaven. But whoſoever ſhall deny me before men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which is in heaven.* And now can any thing be plainer, than that our Saviour requires his diſciples to make confeſſion of him before kings and governors, and not to deny him for fear of any thing which they can do to them? But let us inquire a little farther, and ſee how the Apoſtles, who received this precept from our Saviour himſelf, did underſtand it. Acts iv. 17. 18. 19. we find Peter and John ſummoned before the Jewiſh magiſtrates, who *ſtrictly commanded them not to ſpeak at all, nor teach in the name of Jeſus. But Peter and John anſwered and ſaid unto them, Whether it be right in the ſight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.* And when they ſtill perſiſted in their courſe, notwithſtanding the command of the magiſtrate, and were called again before the council, chap. v. 27. 28. and *the high prieſt aſked them, ſaying, Did we not ſtraitly command you, that you ſhould not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Jeruſalem with your doctrine:* they return them again the ſame anſwer, ℣ 29. *Then Peter and the other apoſtles anſwered and ſaid, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

And let any man now judge, whether our Saviour did not oblige men to confeſs him even before magiſtrates, and to obey him rather than men. And indeed how can any man in reaſon think, that the great King and Governor of the world ſhould inveſt any man with a power to controul his authority, and to oblige men to diſobey and renounce him, *by whom kings reign, and princes decree judgment?* This is a thing ſo unreaſonable, that it can

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can hardly be imagined, that any thing but downright malice against God and religion could prompt any man to advance such an assertion.

I should now have proceeded to the fourth and last particular which I proposed to speak to; namely, to vindicate the reasonableness of this precept of self-denial, and suffering for Christ, which, at first appearance, may seem to be so very harsh and difficult. But this, together with the application of this discourse, shall be reserved to another opportunity.

SERMON LXVII.

Of self-denial, and suffering for Christ's sake.

MATTH. xvi. 24.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

The second sermon on this text.

THen said Jesus unto his disciples; that is, upon occasion of his former discourse with them concerning his approaching passion, and that he must shortly go up to Jerusalem, and there *suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes,* and at last be put to death by them: *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me;* that is, if any man will be my disciple, and undertake the profession of my religion, he must do it upon these terms of self-denial and suffering.

In the handling of these words, I proceeded in this method.

I. I considered the way which our Saviour here useth in making proselytes, and gaining men over to his religion. He offers no manner of force and violence to compel men to the profession of it, but fairly proposeth it to their consideration and choice, telling them plainly upon

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upon what terms they must be his disciples; if they like them, and be resolved to submit to them, well; if not, it is in vain to follow him any longer; for they *cannot be his disciples.* And to use any other way than this to gain men over to religion, is contrary both to the nature of man, who is a reasonable creature; and to the nature of religion, which, if it be not our free choice, cannot be religion.

II. I explained this duty or precept of self-denial expressed in these words, *Let him deny himself, and take up his cross;* which phrase of *taking up one's cross,* is an allusion to the Roman custom; which was, that the malefactor that was to be crucified, was to take up his cross upon his shoulders, and to carry it to the place of execution.

Now, for our clearer understanding of this precept of self-denial, I told you, that it is not to be extended to every thing that may properly be called by that name, but to be limited by the plain scope and intendment of our Saviour's discourse; and therefore I did, in the

1. First place, remove several things which are instanced in by some, as intended and required by this precept. As,

1*st*, That we should deny and renounce our own senses in matters of faith. But this I shewed to be absurd and impossible; because if we do not believe what we see, or will believe contrary to what we see, we destroy all certainty, there being no greater than that of sense. Besides that the evidence of faith being less clear and certain than that of sense, it is contrary to the nature of assent, which is always swayed and borne down by the greatest and clearest evidence. So that we cannot assent to any thing in plain contradiction to the evidence of sense.

2*dly*, Others would comprehend under this precept the denying of our reason in matters of faith; which is in the next degree of absurdity to the other; because no man can believe any thing, but upon some reason or other; and to believe without any reason, or against reason, is to make faith unreasonable, and infidelity reasonable.

3*dly*, Others pretend, that, by virtue of this precept, men

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men ought to be content to renounce their own eternal happiness, and to be miserable for ever, for the glory of God, and the salvation of their brethren. But this, I shewed, cannot be a duty, for this plain reason, because if it were, there is no argument left powerful enough to persuade a man to it. And as for the two scripture-instances alledged to this purpose; Moses's wish of being *blotted out of the book of life* for the people of Israel, signifies no more than a temporal death; and St. Paul's of being *accursed from Christ for his brethren*, is only an hyperbolical expression of his great passion and zeal for the salvation of his countrymen; as is evident from the form of the expression, such as is commonly used to usher in an hyperbole; "I could wish." And, in the

2. Second place, I shewed positively, that the plain meaning of this precept of self-denial is this, and nothing but this: That we should be willing to part with all our temporal interests and enjoyments, and even life itself, for the sake of Christ and his religion; this is to *deny ourselves:* and then that we should be willing to bear any temporal inconvenience and suffering upon the same account; this is to *take up our cross*. And this I shewed from the instances which our Saviour gives of self-denial, whenever he had occasion to discourse of it.

III. I considered the strict and indispensable obligation of this precept of self-denial, rather than to forsake Christ and his religion. Without this disposition and resolution of mind we *cannot be his disciples;* and *if we deny him before men, he will also deny us before his Father which is in heaven*. And this confession of him and his truth we are to make before kings and governors, and notwithstanding their commands to the contrary; which are of no force against the laws and commands of God.

Thus far I have gone. There remains only the

IV. Fourth and last particular which I proposed to speak to, *viz.* to vindicate the reasonableness of this self-denial and suffering for Christ, which at first appearance may seem to be so very difficult. And this precept cannot be thought unreasonable, if we take into consideration these three things.

1. That he who requires this of us, hath himself given us the greatest example of self-denial that ever was.

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The greatest in itself, in that he denied himself more, and suffered more grievous things, than it is possible for any of us to do: and such an example as, in the circumstances of it, is most apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it; because all his self-denial and sufferings were for our sakes.

2. If we consider that he hath promised all needful supplies of his grace to enable us to the discharge of this difficult duty of self-denial and suffering, and to support and comfort us therein.

3. He hath assured us of a glorious reward of all our sufferings and self-denial, beyond the proportion of them, both in the degree and duration of it. I shall go over these as briefly as I can.

1. If we consider, that he who requires us thus to deny ourselves for him, hath given us the greatest example of self-denial that ever was. Our Saviour knowing how unwelcome this doctrine of self-denial and suffering must needs be to his disciples, and how hardly this precept would go down with them; to sweeten it a little, and take off the harshness of it, and to prepare their minds the better for it, he tells them first of his own sufferings, that by that means he might, in some measure, reconcile their minds to it, when they saw that he required nothing of them, but what he was ready to undergo himself, and to give them the example of it. And upon this occasion it was, that our Saviour acquaints them with the hard and difficult terms upon which they must be his disciples: ℣ 21. the Evangelist tells us, that *Jesus began to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed. Then said Jesus unto his disciples;* that is, immediately upon this discourse of his own sufferings, as the fittest time for it, he takes the opportunity to tell them plainly of their own sufferings; and that unless they were prepared and resolved to deny themselves so far, as to suffer all manner of persecution, for his sake, and the profession of his religion, they could not be his disciples. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me;* that is, let him reckon and resolve upon following that example of self-denial and suffering in

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which I will go before him. Now, the consideration of this example of self-denial and suffering which our Saviour hath given us, hath great force in it to reconcile us to this difficult duty, and to shew the reasonableness of it.

1. In that he who requires us thus to deny ourselves, hath himself in his own person given us the greatest example of self-denial that ever was. And,

2. Such an example as, in all the circumstances of it, is most apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it; because all his self-denial and sufferings were for our sakes.

1st, He who requires us thus to deny ourselves, hath himself in his own person given us the greatest example of self-denial that ever was; in that he denied himself more, and suffered more grievous things, than any of us can do. He bore the insupportable load of all the sins of mankind, and of the wrath and vengeance due to them. *Never was sorrow like to his sorrow wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. His visage was marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men:* i. e. he underwent more affliction, and had more contempt poured upon him, than ever was upon any of the sons of men: and yet he endured all this with incredible patience and meekness, with the greatest evenness and constancy of mind, and with the most perfect submission and resignation of himself to the will of God that can be imagined.

Such an example as this should be of great force to animate us with the like courage and resolution in lesser dangers and difficulties. To see *the captain of our salvation* going before us, and leading us on so bravely, and *made perfect by* greater *sufferings* than we can ever be called to, or are any ways able to undergo, is no small argument and encouragement to us, to *take up our cross, and follow him.* The consideration of the unknown sufferings of the Son of God, so great as we cannot well conceive of them, should make all the afflictions and sufferings that can befal us, not only tolerable, but easy to us. Upon this consideration it is, that the Apostle animates Christians to patience in their Christian course, notwithstanding all the hardships and sufferings that attended it:

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Heb. xii. 1. 2. 3. *Let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who endured the cross, and despised the shame. For consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

And this example is more powerful for our encouragement, because therein we see the world conquered to our hands, and all the terrors and temptations of it baffled and subdued, and thereby a cheap and easy victory over it obtained for us. By this consideration, our Saviour endeavours to inspire his disciples with chearfulness and courage in this great conflict, John xvi. 33. *In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

2*dly*, This example of our Saviour is such as, in all the circumstances of it, is most apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it; because all his self-denial and sufferings were for our sakes, in pity and kindness to us, and wholly for our benefit and advantage. We are apt to have their example in great regard, from whom we have received great kindness and mighty benefits. This pattern of self-denial and suffering, which our religion proposeth to us, is the example of one, whom we have reason to esteem, and love, and imitate, above any person in the world. It is the example of our Lord and Master, of our Sovereign and our Saviour, of the founder of our religion, and of *the author and finisher of our faith:* and surely such an example must needs carry authority with it, and command our imitation. It is the example of our best friend and greatest benefactor; of him who laid down his life for us, and sealed his love to us with his dearest blood; and even when we were bitter enemies to him, did and suffered more for us than any man ever did for his best friend. If we should be reduced to poverty and want, let us consider him, *who being lord of all, had not where to lay his head; who being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.* If it should be our lot to *be persecuted for righteousness sake*, and exercised with sufferings and reproaches, let us *look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who endured the cross and despised the shame* for our sakes.

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In a word, can we be discontented at any condition, or decline it in a good cause; when we consider how contented the Son of God was, in the meanest and most destitute, how meek and patient in the most afflicted and suffering condition; how he welcomed all events, and was so perfectly resigned to the will of his heavenly Father, that whatever pleased God, pleased him?

And surely in no case is example more necessary than in this, to engage and encourage us in the discharge of so difficult a duty, so contrary to the bent and inclination of flesh and blood. A bare precept of self-denial, and a peremptory command to sacrifice our own wills, our ease, our pleasure, our reputation, yea and life itself, to the glory of God, and the maintenance of his truth, would have sounded very harsh and severe, had not the practice of all this been mollified and sweetened by a pattern of so much advantage; by one, who in all these respects denied himself much more than it is possible for us to do; by one who might have insisted upon a greater right, who abased himself, and stooped from a greater height and dignity; who was not forced into a condition of meanness and poverty, but chose it for our sakes; who submitted to suffering, though he had never deserved it. Here is an example that hath all the argument, and all the encouragement that can be to the imitation of it.

Such an example is of greater force and authority than any precept or law can be: so that well might our Lord, thus going before us, command us to follow him, and say, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* For if he thus denied himself, well may we, who have much less to deny, but much more cause and reason to do it. He did it voluntarily, and of choice; but it is our duty. He did it for our sakes; we do it for our own. His own goodness moved him to deny himself for us; but gratitude obligeth us to deny ourselves in any thing for him. We did not in the least deserve any thing from him; but he hath wholly merited all this, and infinitely more, from us. So that such an example as this is, in all the circumstances of it, cannot but be very powerful and effectual to oblige us to the imitation of it. But the reasonableness

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ſonableneſs of this precept will yet farther appear, if we conſider, in the

2. Second place, that God hath promiſed to all ſincere Chriſtians all needful ſupplies of his grace, to enable them to the diſcharge of this difficult duty of ſelf-denial, and to ſupport and comfort them therein. For the Spirit of Chriſt dwells in Chriſtians, and the ſame glorious power that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, works mightily in them that believe; Eph. i. 19. 20. *That ye may know* (ſaith St. Paul, ſpeaking in general to all Chriſtians) *what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power; which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead.* Of ourſelves we are very weak, and the temptations and terrors of the world very powerful; but there is a principle reſiding in every true Chriſtian, able to bear us up againſt the world, and the power of all its temptations. *Whatſoever is born of God,* (ſaith St. John), *overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome; becauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

And this grace and ſtrength was afforded to the firſt Chriſtians in a moſt extraordinary manner, for their comfort and ſupport under ſufferings; ſo that they were *ſtrengthened with all might according to God's glorious power, unto all long-ſuffering with joyfulneſs;* as St. Paul prays for the Coloſſians, chap. i. 11. And theſe *conſolations of the Spirit of God,* this *joy in the Holy Ghoſt,* was not peculiarly appropriated to the firſt times of Chriſtianity; but is ſtill afforded to all ſincere Chriſtians, in ſuch degree as is neceſſary and convenient for them. And whenever God exerciſeth good men with trials more than human, and ſuch ſufferings as are beyond the ordinary rate of human ſtrength and patience to bear, he hath promiſed to endue them with more than human courage and reſolution. So St. Paul tells the Corinthians, 1 Cor. x. 13. *He is faithful, that hath promiſed, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it.* And why ſhould we be daunted at any ſuffering, if God be pleaſed to increaſe

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our strength in proportion to the sharpness of our sufferings?

And blessed be God, many of our persecuted brethren at this day have remarkably found this comfortable assistance and support; though many likewise have fallen through fear and weakness, as it also happened in the primitive times. But where-ever this promise is not made good, it is (as I have formerly said) by reason of some fault and failing on our part. Either men were not sincere in the profession of the truth; and then, no wonder if, *when tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the word, they are offended, and fall off:* or else they were too confident of themselves, and did not seek God's grace and assistance, and rely upon it as they ought; and thereupon God hath left them to themselves, (as he did Peter), to convince them of their own frailty and rash confidence; and yet, even in that case, when there is truth and sincerity at the bottom, there is no reason to doubt, but that the goodness of God is such, as by some means or other to give to such persons (as he did to Peter) the opportunity of recovering themselves by repentance, and a more stedfast resolution afterwards.

3. If we consider, in the last place, that our Saviour hath assured us of a glorious and eternal reward of all our self-denial and sufferings for him; a reward infinitely beyond the proportion of our sufferings, both in the degree and duration of it. Now, the clear discovery of this is peculiarly owing to the Christian religion, and *the appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, by the gospel.*

And, as our blessed Saviour hath assured us of this blessed state of good men in another world; so hath he likewise assured us, that greater degrees of this happiness shall be the portion of those who suffer for him and his truth: Matth. v. 10. 11. 12. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.* And nothing surely can be

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be more reaſonable, than to part with things of ſmall value, for things infinitely greater and more conſiderable; to forego the tranſient pleaſures and enjoyments, and the imperfect felicities of this world, for the ſolid, and perfect, and perpetual happineſs of a better life; and to exchange a ſhort and miſerable life, for eternal life and bleſſedneſs: in a word, to be content to be driven home, to be baniſhed out of this world into our own native country, and to be violently thruſt out of this vale of tears into thoſe regions of bliſs, where are *joys unſpeakable, and full of glory.*

This conſideration St. Paul tells us ſupported the primitive Chriſtians under their ſharpeſt and heavieſt ſufferings, 2 Cor. iv. 16. 17. 18. *For this cauſe* (ſays he) *we faint not; becauſe our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are ſeen, but the things which are not ſeen: for the things which are ſeen, are temporal; but the things which are not ſeen, are eternal.* So that our ſufferings bear no more proportion to the reward of them, than finite does to infinite, than temporal to eternal, between which there is no proportion.

All that now remains, is, to draw ſome uſeful inferences from what hath been diſcourſed concerning this great and difficult duty of ſelf-denial for the ſake of Chriſt and his religion. And they ſhall be theſe following.

1. To acknowledge the great goodneſs of God to us, that all theſe laws and commands, even the hardeſt and ſevereſt of them, are ſo reaſonable.

God, as he is our maker, and gave us our beings, hath an entire and ſovereign right over us; and, by virtue of that right, might have impoſed very hard things upon us; and this without the giving account to us of any of his matters, and without propounding any reward to us, ſo vaſtly diſproportionable to our obedience to him. But, in giving laws to us, he hath not made uſe of this right. The moſt ſevere and rigorous commands of the goſpel are ſuch, that we ſhall be infinitely gainers by our obedience to them. If we deny ourſelves any thing in this world for Chriſt and his religion, we

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shall in the next be considered for it to the utmost; not only far beyond what it can deserve, but beyond what we can conceive or imagine; for this perishing life, and the transitory trifles and enjoyments of it, we shall receive *a kingdom which cannot be shaken, an incorruptible crown which fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens.* For these are *faithful sayings*, and we shall infallibly find them true, that *if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him; if we be persecuted for righteousness sake, great shall be our reward in heaven:* if we part with our temporal life, we shall be made partakers of eternal life. He that is firmly persuaded of the happiness of the next world, and believes *the glory which shall then be revealed*, hath no reason to be so much offended at the sufferings of this present time, so long as he knows and believes, that *these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

2. Seeing this is required of every Christian, to be always in a preparation and disposition of mind to deny ourselves, and to take up our cross; if we do in good earnest resolve to be Christians, we ought to sit down, and consider well with ourselves, what our religion will cost us, and whether we be content to come up to the price of it. If we value any thing in this world above Christ and his truth, *we are not worthy of him.* If it come to this, that we must either renounce him and his religion, or quit our temporal interests; if we be not ready to forego these, nay, and to part even with life itself, rather than to forsake him and his truth, *we are not worthy of him.* These are the terms of our Christianity; and therefore we are required in baptism solemnly to renounce the world. And our Saviour, from this very consideration, infers, that all who take upon them the profession of his religion, should consider seriously beforehand, and count the cost of it: Luke xiv. 28. 31. 33. *Which of you* (says he) *intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Or what king going to war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? So likewise, whosoever he be, that forsaketh not all he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

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disciple. You see the terms upon which we are Christians: we must always be prepared in the resolution of our minds, to deny ourselves, and take up our cross, though we are not actually put upon this trial.

3. What hath been said is matter of great comfort and encouragement to all those who deny themselves, and suffer upon so good an account: of whom, God knows, there are too great a number at this day, in several parts of the world; some under actual sufferings, such as cannot but move compassion and horror in all that hear of them; others who are fled hither, and into other countries, for refuge and shelter from one of the sharpest persecutions that perhaps ever was, if all the circumstances of it be duly considered. But not to enlarge upon so unpleasant a theme, they who suffer for the truth, and righteousness sake, have all the comfort and encouragement, that the best example, and the greatest and most glorious promises of God, can give. They have the best example in their view, *Jesus the author and finisher of their faith; who endured the cross, and despised the shame.* So that how great and terrible soever their sufferings be, they do but tread in the steps of the Son of God, and of the best and holiest man that ever was; and he who is their great example in suffering, will likewise be their support, and their exceeding great reward.

So that though suffering for Christ be accounted great self-denial, and he is graciously pleased so to accept it, because, in denying things present and sensible, for things future and invisible, we do not only declare our affection to him, but our great faith and confidence in him, by shewing that we rely upon his word, and venture all upon the security which he offers us in another world: yet, according to a right estimate of things, and to those who *walk by faith*, and *not by sight*, this which we call self-denial, is, in truth and reality, but a more commendable sort of self-love; because we do herein most effectually consult, and secure, and advance our own happiness.

4. and lastly, Since God hath been pleased for so long a time to excuse us from this hardest part of self-denial, let us not grudge to deny ourselves in lesser matters, for the sake of his truth and religion; to miss a good place,

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or to quit it upon that account: much less let us think much to renounce our vices, and to thwart our evil inclinations for his sake. As Naaman's servant said to him concerning the means prescribed by the Prophet for his cure, *If he had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much more, when he hath only said, Wash and be clean?* so, since God imposeth no harder terms upon us, than repentance, and reformation of our lives, we should readily and thankfully submit to them.

This, I know, is difficult to some, to *mortify their earthly members*, to *crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts of it*; it is like *cutting off a right hand*, and *plucking out a right eye*. Some are so strongly addicted to their lusts and vices, that they could with more ease despise life in many cases, than thus deny themselves. But, in truth, there is no more of self-denial in it, than a man denies himself when he is mortally sick and wounded, in being content to be cured, and willing to be well. This is not at all to our temporal prejudice and inconvenience; and it directly conduceth to our eternal happiness: for there is no man that lives a holy and virtuous life, and in obedience to the laws of God, that can lightly receive any prejudice by it in this world. Since God doth not call us to suffer, we should do so much the more for him; since he doth not put us to testify our love to him by laying down our lives for him, we should shew it by a greater care to keep his commandments.

God was pleased to exercise the first Christians with great sufferings, and to try their love and constancy to him and his truth in a very extraordinary manner, by severity and contempt; by *the spoiling of their goods*, and *the loss of all things*; by *bonds and imprisonments*; by *cruel mockings and scourgings*; by the extremity of torments, and by *resisting even unto blood*; by being *killed for his sake all the day long, and appointed as sheep for the slaughter*. God was pleased to make their way to heaven very sharp and painful, and to *hedge it in* as it were *with thorns on every side*; so that they could not but *through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of heaven*.

Thus we ought all to be in a readiness and resolution to submit to this duty, if God should think fit at any time

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time of our lives to call us to it. But if he be pleaſed to excuſe us from it, and to *let this cup paſs from us*, (which may lawfully be our earneſt prayer to God, ſince we have ſo good a pattern for it), there will be another duty incumbent upon us, which will take up the whole man, and the whole time of our life; and that is, to *ſerve him without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him all the days of our lives.*

SERMON LXVIII.

Good men ſtrangers and ſojourners upon earth.

Preached at Whitehall, before the Royal family, Nov. 1. 1686.

HEB. xi. 13.

And confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The whole verſe runs thus:

Theſe all died in faith, not having received the promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſuaded of them, and embraced them, and confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

THE Apoſtle having declared, at the latter end of the foregoing chapter, that faith is the great principle whereby good men are acted, and whereby they are ſupported under all the evils and ſufferings of this life, ℣ 38. *Now the juſt ſhall live by faith*; in this chapter he makes it his main buſineſs to ſet forth to us at large the force and power of faith. And to this purpoſe, he firſt tells us what kind of faith he means, *viz.* a firm perſuaſion of things not preſent and viſible to ſenſe, but inviſible and future, ℣ 1. *Now faith* (ſaith he) *is the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen.* Faith repreſents to us the reality

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reality of things which are inviſible to ſenſe, as the exiſtence of God, and his providence; and of things which are at a great diſtance from us, as the future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments in another world.

And then he proceeds to ſhew, by particular and famous inſtances, that the firm belief and perſuaſion of theſe things was the great principle of the piety and virtue of the ſaints, and of good men in all ages of the world. By this Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, Joſeph and Moſes, and all the famous heroes of the Old Teſtament, *obtained a good report*, and *pleaſed God*, and did all thoſe eminent acts of obedience and ſelf-denial which are recorded of them. They *believed the being of God, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* They dreaded his threatenings, and relied upon his promiſes of future and inviſible good things. They lived and died in a full perſuaſion and confidence of the truth of them, though they did not live to ſee them actually fulfilled and accompliſhed. *All theſe* (ſaith he, ſpeaking of thoſe eminent ſaints which he had inſtanced in before) *died in faith, not having received the promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſuaded of them, and embraced them.* This is ſpoken with a more particular regard to Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, to whom the promiſes of the conqueſt and poſſeſſion of a fruitful land were made, and of a numerous offspring; among whom ſhould be the Meſſias, in whom all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed.

Theſe promiſes they did not live to ſee accompliſhed and made good in their days; but they heartily believed them, and rejoiced in the hope and expectation of them, as if they had embraced them in their arms, and been put into the actual poſſeſſion of them: *And they confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

This ſaying and acknowledgment more particularly and immediately refers to thoſe ſayings of the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, which we find recorded Gen. xxiii. 4.; where Abraham ſays to the ſons of Heth, *I am a ſtranger and a ſojourner with you;* and chap. xlvii. 9. where Jacob ſays to Pharaoh, *The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the*

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the days of the years of my life been. These good men were *strangers and sojourners* in a land which was promised to be theirs afterwards. They dwelt in it themselves as *strangers*, but were in expectation that it would one day become the inheritance of their posterity.

Now, in this, as by a type and shadow, the Apostle represents to us the condition of good men, while they are passing through this world: They are *pilgrims and strangers in the earth;* they travel up and down the world for a time, as the Patriarchs did in the land of Canaan, but are in expectation of a better and more settled condition hereafter: *They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly,* says the Apostle, at the 16th verse of this chapter.

That which I design from these words, is, to represent to us our present condition in this world, and to awaken us to a due sense and serious consideration of it. It is the same condition that all the saints and holy men that are gone before us were in in this world: and every one of us may say with David, Psal. xxxix. 12. *I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.* It is a condition very troublesome and very unsettled, such as that of *pilgrims and strangers* useth to be. This we must all acknowledge, if we judge rightly of our present state and condition. *They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;* but yet it was not without the hope and expectation of a better and happier condition in reversion. So it follows just after, *They that say such things,* (that is, *that confess themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth*), *declare plainly that they seek a country.*

This bore up the Patriarchs under all the evils and troubles of their pilgrimage, that they expected an inheritance, and a quiet and settled possession of that good land which God had promised to them. Answerably to which, good men do expect, after *the few and evil days of their pilgrimage* in this world are over, a blessed inheritance in *a better country, that is, an heavenly;* and, with blessed Abraham, the father of the faithful, they *look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;* as it is said of that good Patriarch at the 10th verse of this chapter.

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It is very frequent, not only in ſcripture, but in other authors, to repreſent our condition in this world by that of pilgrims and ſojourners in a foreign country: for the mind, which is the man, and our immortal ſouls, which are by far the moſt noble and excellent part of ourſelves, are the natives of heaven, and but *pilgrims and ſtrangers* here *in the earth*; and, when the days of our pilgrimage ſhall be over, are deſigned to return to that *heavenly country* from which they came, and to which they belong. And therefore the Apoſtle tells us, Phil. iii. 20. that Chriſtians have relation to heaven, as their native place and country: Ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, *our converſation is in heaven*; ſo we render the words: but they properly ſignify, that Chriſtians are members of that city and ſociety which is above; and tho' they converſe at preſent here below, while they are paſſing through this world, yet heaven is the country to which they do belong, and whither they are continually tending; *ſedes ubi fata quietas oſtendunt*, "where "a quiet habitation, and a perpetual reſt, is deſigned "and prepared for them." This acknowledgment David makes concerning himſelf and all the people of God, 1 Chron. xxix. 15. *For we are ſtrangers before thee, and ſojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days on the earth are as a ſhadow, and there is none abiding.* So likewiſe St. Peter, 1 epiſt. i. 17. *Paſs the time of your ſojourning here in fear*; and chap. ii. 11. *Dearly beloved, I beſeech you as ſtrangers and pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly luſts.*

And not only the inſpired writers of holy ſcripture, but Heathen authors, do frequently make uſe of this alluſion. Plato tells us, it was a common ſaying, and almoſt in every man's mouth, Παροικία τις ἐστὶν ὁ βίος, "The life of man is a kind of pilgrimage." And Tully, in his excellent diſcourſe *de ſenectute*, "concern-"ing old age," brings in Cato deſcribing our paſſage out of this world, not as a departure from our home, but like a man leaving his inn, in which he hath lodged for a night or two: *Ex vita iſta diſcedo tanquam ex hoſpitio, non tanquam ex domo; commorandi enim natura diverſorium nobis, non habitandi, dedit*: "When I leave this "world, (ſays he), I look upon myſelf as departing out "of an inn, and not as quitting mine own home and "habitation;

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"habitation; nature having assigned this world to us "as a place to sojourn, but not to dwell in." Which is the same with what the Apostle says in the text concerning the Patriarchs, *They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;* and concerning all Christians, chap. xiii. 14. *Here have we no continuing city; but we seek one to come.*

But I do not intend to follow the metaphor too close, and to vex and torture it, by pursuing all those little parallels and similitudes which a lively fancy might make or find, betwixt the condition of strangers and pilgrims, and the life of man during his abode and passage through this world. I will insist only upon two things, which seem plainly to be designed and intended by this metaphor; and they are these.

1. That our condition in this world is very troublesome and unsettled: *They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

2. It implies a tendency to a future settling, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition, into which we shall enter when we go out of this world. For so it follows in the very next words after the text, *They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. They that say such things*; that is, they that acknowledge themselves to have lived in such a restless and uncertain condition in this world, travelling from one place to another, as the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did, and yet pretend to be persuaded of the goodness of God, and the faithfulness of his promise, in which he solemnly declared himself to be their God, do hereby plainly shew, that they expect some happier condition hereafter, wherein that great promise of God will be made good to them to the full.

And these are two very weighty and useful considerations, that we should both understand our present condition in this world, and our future hope and expectation after our departure out of it, that so we may demean ourselves suitably to both these conditions; both as it is fit for those who look upon themselves as *pilgrims and sojourners* in this world, and likewise as it becomes those who *seek* and expect *a better country*, and hope to be

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made partakers of a bleſſed immortality in another world. I ſhall briefly ſpeak to both theſe; and then ſhew what effect and influence the ſerious meditation of theſe two points ought to have upon every one of us.

I. That our condition in this world is very troubleſome and unſettled. This I take to be principally intended in the metaphor of *ſtrangers and pilgrims*. Such was the life of the Patriarchs, which is here ſpoken of in the text: they had no conſtant abode and fixed habitation, but were continually wandering from one kingdom and country to another; in which travels they were expoſed to a great many hazards and dangers, afflictions and miſeries, affronts and injuries, as we read at large in the hiſtory of their travels in the Old Teſtament. And ſuch is our condition in this world; it is often troubleſome, and always uncertain and unſettled.

It is often very troubleſome: not to inſiſt upon the weak condition of infancy and childhood, the helpleſsneſs of that ſtate, and inſufficiency of it for its own preſervation, and the ſupply of its natural wants and neceſſities; not to mention the dangerous vanity and deſperate folly of youth, nor the infirmities and contempts, the many tedious and wearisome days and nights that old age is commonly grieved and afflicted withal; to that degree, as to make life not only unpleaſant, but almoſt an intolerable burden to us: not to dwell upon theſe, which yet take up and poſſeſs a great ſhare and portion of our lives; if we look upon man in his beſt ſtate, we ſhall find him, as David hath long ſince pronounced on him, to be *altogether vanity*. We need not go a pilgrimage, and travel into remote countries, to make life more troubleſome and uneaſy. In what part of the world ſoever we are, even that which we improperly call our own home and native country, we ſhall meet with trouble and inconvenience enough to convince us, that we are but *ſtrangers* in it. More eſpecially good men are peculiarly liable to a great many evils and ſufferings, upon account of their piety and virtue. They *are not of the world*, (as our bleſſed Saviour tells his diſciples, John xv. 19.); and *becauſe they are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them*, and taketh all opportunities and occaſions to vex and perſecute them in one kind or other, either

ther by doing all manner of evil to them, or by speaking all manner of evil of them.

But suppose we escape trouble upon this account, there are abundance of common and natural inconveniences, which render human life very uneasy. For either we must live alone, or in the company and society of others: one of these two is necessary and unavoidable. Suppose we would live alone; how few are there that can enjoy themselves tolerably alone for any considerable time? For though there be a great deal too much of self-love in mankind, and men are generally extremely fond of themselves; yet I know not how it happens, though so it is, that very few men in the world care for their own company, or can endure, for any considerable time, to converse only with themselves; nay, for the most part, they are sooner glutted with themselves, and surfeited of their own conversation, than with the worst company they can meet with: A shrewd sign, as one would think, that they knew something worse by themselves than of any body else; or at least they know it more certainly. It is a wise and deep saying of Aristotle, "Whoever affects to be alone, must be ἢ θεὸς, ἢ θη-"ρίον, either a god or a wild beast:" either he must be sufficient for himself, and want nothing; or of so wild and savage a dispositon, as to destroy every thing that is weaker, and to run away from every thing that is stronger than himself. Now, man is neither good enough to be contented and satisfied with himself, nor bad enough to hate and avoid every body else; and therefore he must enter into society, and keep company with other men.

And if we go abroad into the world, and try the conversation of men, it cannot but grieve us to see a great many things, which yet we must see every day; the censoriousness, and uncharitableness, and insincerity of men one towards another; to see with what kindness they will treat one another to the face, and how hardly they will use them behind their backs. If there were nothing else, this one naughty quality, so common and reigning among mankind, were enough to make an honest and true-hearted man, one that loves plainness and sincerity, to be heartily sick of the world, and glad to steal off the

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ſtage, where there is nothing native and ſincere, but all perſonated and acted; where the converſation of a great part of men is all deſigning and inſidious, full of flattery and falſhood, of good words and ill offices: *One ſpeaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth; but in his heart he lieth in wait,* as it is in the Prophet, Jer. ix. 8. And when a man hath done all the good turns he can, and endeavoured to oblige every man, and not only to live inoffenſively, but exemplarily: he is fairly dealt withal, and comes off upon good terms, if he can but eſcape the ill words of men for doing well, and obtain a pardon for thoſe things which truly deſerve praiſe.

But ſetting aſide theſe, and the like melancholy conſiderations; when we are in the health and vigour of our age, when our blood is warm and our ſpirits quick, and the humours of our body not yet turned and ſowred by great diſappointments, and grievous loſſes of our eſtates, or neareſt friends and relations, by a long courſe of afflictions, by many croſs events and calamitous accidents; yet we are continually liable to all theſe; and the perpetual fear and danger of them is no ſmall trouble and uneaſineſs to our minds, and does in a great meaſure rob us of the comfort and eat out the pleaſure and ſweetneſs of all our enjoyments; and, by degrees, the evils we fear overtake us; and as one affliction and trouble goes off, another ſucceeds in the place of it; like Job's meſſengers, whoſe bad tidings and reports of calamitous accidents came ſo thick upon him, that they overtook one another.

If we have a plentiful fortune, we are apt to abuſe it to intemperance and luxury; and this naturally breeds bodily pains and diſeaſes, which take away all the comfort and enjoyment of a great eſtate. If we have health, it may be we are afflicted with loſſes, or deprived of friends, or croſſed in our intereſts and deſigns; and one thing or other happens to impede or interrupt the contentment and happineſs of our lives. Sometimes an unexpected ſtorm, or ſome other ſudden calamity, ſweepeth away, in an inſtant, all that which with ſo much induſtry and care we have been gathering many years. Or if an eſtate ſtand firm, our children are taken away, to whoſe comfort and advantage all the pains and endeavours of our

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our lives were devoted. Or if none of these happen, as it is very rare to escape most, or some of them; yet for a demonstration to us, that God intended this world to be uneasy, to convince us that a perfect state of happiness is not to be had here below, we often see in experience, that those who seem to be in a condition as happy as this world can put them into, by the greatest accommodations towards it, are yet as far or farther from happiness, as those who are destitute of most of those things wherein the greatest felicity of this world is thought to consist. Many times it so happens, that they who have all the furniture and requisites, all the materials and ingredients of a worldly felicity at their command, and in their power, yet have not the skill and ability out of all these to frame a happy condition of life to themselves. They have health, and friends, and reputation, and estate in abundance, and all outward accommodations that heart can wish; and yet, in the midst of all these circumstances of outward felicity, they are uneasy in their minds, and, as the wise man * expresseth it, *in their sufficiency they are in straits*, and are as it were surfeited even with happiness itself; and do so fantastically and unaccountably nauseate the good condition they are in, that though they want nothing to make them happy, yet they cannot think themselves so; though they have nothing in the world to molest and disgust them, yet they can make a shift to create as much trouble to themselves out of nothing, as they who have the real and substantial causes of discontent.

Which plainly shews, that we are not to look for happiness here; it is not to be found in this land of the living: and, after our inquiries after it, we shall see sufficient reason to take up Solomon's conclusion, that *all is vanity, and vexation of spirit;* which is much the same with that aphorism of David his father, which I mentioned before, that *man in his best estate is altogether vanity.*

But what happiness soever our condition in this world is capable of, it is most assuredly full of uncertainty and unsettlement: we cannot enjoy it long, and every moment we are in danger of being deprived of it. What-

* Probably the author should have here said Zophar, whose are the words he quotes, Job xx. 22.

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ever degree of earthly felicity we are poſſeſſed of, we have no ſecurity that it ſhall continue. There is nothing in this world, but when we are as ſure of it as this world can make us, may be taken away from us by a thouſand accidents. But ſuppoſe it to abide and continue, we ourſelves ſhall be taken away from it: we muſt die, and *in that very day* all our enjoyments and hopes, as to this world, will *periſh* with us; for here is no abiding place, *we have no continuing city:* ſo that it is in vain to deſign a happineſs to ourſelves in this world, when we are not to ſtay in it, but only travel and paſs through it.

And this is the firſt, our condition in this world is very troubleſome and unſettled.

II. Our condition in this world being a ſtate of pilgrimage, doth imply a tendency to future ſettlement, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition hereafter. And ſo the Apoſtle reaſons immediately after the text, *They confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth: for they that ſay ſuch things, declare plainly that they ſeek a country;* that is, they who acknowledge themſelves to be *ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth,* and yet withal profeſs to be perſuaded of the goodneſs of God, and the fidelity of his promiſe, *do plainly declare that they ſeek* another *country.* This is ſpoken of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, who acknowledged themſelves to be *ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth,* and thereby *declared that they ſought another country.* Now, ſays the Apoſtle, this cannot be the country from whence they firſt came, Ur of the Chaldees, ℣ 15. *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had an opportunity of returning thither.* And therefore he concludes, that the country which they ſought, was a better country than any in this world, ℣ 16. *But now they deſire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not aſhamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.* This plainly refers to that famous declaration or promiſe of God to the Patriarchs of being their God: *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob.* Now, certainly this promiſe of God did ſignify ſome very great bleſſing and advantage to thoſe faithful ſervants of God

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God above others. This was not made good to them in this world; for *they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* Where then is the blessing spoken of, and signified by the great words of that promise, that *God was their God?* They met with no such condition in this world, as was answerable to the greatness of the promise. From hence the Apostle argues, that they had a firm persuasion of a future happiness: *For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; since he hath prepared for them a city.* And though the promise of God to Abraham did immediately design the land of Canaan, and the earthly Jerusalem; yet the Apostle extends it to that which was typified by it, *viz. an heavenly country, the Jerusalem which is above,* which, at the 10th verse of this chapter, is called *a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* And now, seeing God hath designed and prepared so great a happiness for them in another world, well might he be called *their God,* notwithstanding that they were *strangers and pilgrims on the earth;* that is, though the full meaning and importance of this promise was not made good to them in this world, yet it was accomplished to the full in the happiness which was designed for them in another life. *And God* need *not be ashamed to be called their God;* implying, that if nothing had been meant by it beyond this world, this promise, of God's being *their God,* would have fallen shamefully short of what it seemed to import. And this I conceive to be the true reason why our Saviour lays so much weight upon this promise, as to pitch upon it for the proof of the resurrection; that is, of a future state of happiness in another world.

There are many considerations apt to persuade good men of another life after this: as, that mankind is generally possessed with this hope and persuasion; and that the more wise and virtuous men have been, the more plainly have they apprehended the hopes of immortality, and the better have they been contented to leave this world, as if, seeing farther than other men, they had a clearer prospect of the happiness they were entering upon; but, above all, that God hath made our condition

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dition in this world so troublesome and unsettled, as if he had designed on purpose to make us seek for happiness elsewhere, and to elevate and raise our minds to the hopes and expectation of a condition better and more durable, than any that is to be met with in this world; which, considering the goodness of God, and his gracious providence and care of good men, is a thing of itself extremely credible.

Having thus, as briefly as I could, dispatched the two particulars which I propounded to speak to for the explication of the text, I should now shew what influence these considerations ought to have upon our lives and practice.

And if this be our condition in this world, and these our hopes and expectations as to another life; if we be *strangers and pilgrims on the earth*, and *look for a better country, that is, an heavenly:* this ought to have a great influence upon us, in these following respects, which I shall at present but very briefly mention.

1. Let us intangle and incumber ourselves as little as we can in this our pilgrimage; let us not engage our affections too far in the pleasures and advantages of this world; for we are not to continue and settle in it, but to pass through it. A little will serve for our passage and accommodation in this journey; and beyond that, why should we so earnestly covet and seek more?

2. If we be *strangers and pilgrims*, then it concerns us to behave ourselves blamelessly and inoffensively, remembering that the eyes of people are upon us, and that those among whom we live, will be very curious and observant of our manners and carriage.

3. Let us be chearful and patient under the troubles and afflictions of this present life. They who are in a strange country must expect to encounter many injuries and affronts, and to be put to great difficulties and hazards; which we should endeavour to bear with that chearfulness, as men that are upon a journey use to bear foul ways and bad weather, and inconvenient lodging and accommodations.

4. The consideration of our present condition and future hopes should set us above the fondness of life, and the slavish fear of death. For our minds will never be raised

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raised to their true pitch and height, till we have in some good measure conquered these two passions, and made them subject to our reason. As for this present life, and the enjoyments of it, what do we see in them, that should make us so strangely to dote upon them? *Quæ lucis miseris tam dira cupido?* This world at the best is but a very indifferent place; and he is the wisest man that bears himself towards it with the most indifferent affection; that is always willing to leave it, and yet patient to stay in it as long as God pleases.

5. We should always prefer our duty and a good conscience before all the world; because it is in truth more valuable, if our souls be immortal, and do survive in another world. For (as our Saviour argues) *what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* And thus St. Paul reasoned with himself from the belief of *a resurrection of the just and unjust: For this cause* (saith he) *I exercise myself alway to have a conscience void of offence both toward God, and toward men.*

6. Lastly, If we be sojourners and travellers, we should often think of our end, and carefully mind the way to it. Our end is everlasting happiness, and the way to it is a constant, and sincere, and universal obedience to the commandments of God. When the young man in the gospel inquired of our Saviour the way to eternal happiness, saying, *Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* his answer to him was, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* We may easily mistake our way; for *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it.* Therefore we should often pray to God as David does, Psal. cxix. 19. *I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments from me;* and Psal. cxxxix. 23. 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

SERMON

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SERMON LXIX.

Good men ſtrangers and ſojourners upon earth.

HEB. xi. 13.

And confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The whole verſe runs thus:

Theſe all died in faith, not having received the promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſuaded of them, and embraced them, and confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

I Have lately in this place (upon a particular day and occaſion) begun to handle theſe words; I ſhall briefly give you the heads of what hath been already delivered, and proceed to what remains. And that which I deſigned from this text was, to repreſent our preſent condition in this world, and to awaken our minds to a due ſenſe and conſideration of it. It is the ſame condition that all the ſaints and holy men that have gone before us were in in this world; and we may all of us ſay with David, Pſal. xxxix. 12. *I am a ſtranger with thee, and a ſojourner, as all my fathers were.*

It is very frequent, not only in ſcripture, but in other authors, to repreſent our condition in this world by that of *pilgrims and ſojourners* in a far country. For the mind, which is the man, and our immortal ſouls, which are by far the moſt noble and excellent part of ourſelves, are the natives of heaven, and but *ſtrangers and pilgrims* here on the earth; and when the days of our pilgrimage ſhall be accompliſhed, are deſigned to return to that *heavenly country* from which they came, and to which they belong. And for the explication of this metaphor, I inſiſted only upon two things, which ſeem plainly to be deſigned and intended by it.

1. That

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1. That our condition in this world is very troubleſome and unſettled: *They confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

2. It implies a tendency to a future ſettlement, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition, into which we ſhall enter when we go out of this world.

And theſe I told you are two very weighty and uſeful conſiderations; that we ſhould both underſtand our preſent condition in this world, and our future hopes and expectation after our departure out of it; that ſo we may demean ourſelves ſuitably to both theſe conditions; both as is fit for thoſe who look on themſelves as *pilgrims and ſojourners* in this world, and likewiſe as it becomes thoſe who *ſeek* and expect *a better country*, and hope to be partakers of a bleſſed immortality in another world.

I. That our condition in this world is very troubleſome and unſettled; and this is principally intended by the metaphor of *ſtrangers and pilgrims*. Such was the life of the Patriarchs here ſpoken of in the text; they had no conſtant abode and fixed habitation, but were continually wandering from one kingdom and country to another; in which travels they were expoſed to a great many dangers and ſufferings, affronts and injuries; as we read at large in the hiſtory of their travels in the Old Teſtament. And ſuch is our condition in this world; it is often troubleſome, and always uncertain, and unſettled: ſo that whatever degree of worldly felicity any man is poſſeſſed of, he hath no ſecurity that it ſhall continue for one moment.

II. Our condition in this world being a ſtate of pilgrimage, it implies a tendency to a future ſettlement, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition into which we ſhall enter ſo ſoon as we leave this world. For ſo it follows immediately after the text: *They confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth: for they that ſay ſuch things, declare plainly that they ſeek a country. They that ſay ſuch things*; that is, they that acknowledge themſelves to have lived in ſuch a reſtleſs and uncertain condition in this world, travelling from one place to another, as the Patriarchs Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob did; and yet pretend to be perſuaded of the goodneſs of God, and the faithfulneſs of his promiſe, in

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which he ſo ſolemnly declares himſelf to be their God; do hereby plainly ſhew, that they expect ſome happier condition hereafter, wherein that great promiſe of God will be made good to them to the full; ſo that he need *not be aſhamed to have been called their God.*

Having handled at large theſe two particulars, I come now to ſhew what influence the conſideration of them ought to have upon our lives and practices. And if this be our condition in this world, and theſe our hopes and expectations as to another life; if we be *ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth, and look for a better country, that is, an heavenly,* this ought to have a great influence upon us, in theſe following reſpects, which I did but briefly mention before, but ſhall now proſecute and preſs more largely.

1. Let us intangle and incumber ourſelves as little as we can in this our pilgrimage: let us not engage our affections too far in the pleaſures and advantages of this world; becauſe we are not to ſtay in it, but to paſs through it. Upon this conſideration, the Apoſtle St. Peter doth ſo earneſtly exhort Chriſtians to preſerve themſelves from fleſhly luſts, 1 Pet. ii. 11. *Dearly beloved, I beſeech you as ſtrangers and pilgrims, to abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul.* The gratifying of our inordinate luſts and our carnal and ſenſual inclinations, is directly oppoſite, both to the nature of our immortal ſpirits, and to their great deſign and buſineſs in this world. Fleſhly luſts do not only pollute and defile, but even quench and extinguiſh our diviner part, and do work the ruin and deſtruction of it: they ſink our affections into the mud and filth of this world, and do intangle and detain them there: in a word, they do wholly indiſpoſe and unfit us for that pure, and ſpiritual, and divine life, which alone can qualify us for our heavenly country and inheritance. And therefore, while our ſouls are ſojourning in this world, we ſhould abſtain from them, and preſerve ourſelves unſpotted and untainted by them, as being altogether unuſeful, and perfectly contrary to the laws and manners of our heavenly country. If we wallow in brutiſh and filthy luſts as we paſs through this world, our native country, when our ſouls think to return to it, will reject us, and caſt us out: when

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when we come to heaven's gate, and knock there, expecting to be admitted, and shall cry, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*, he will bid us to *depart from him*, because we have been *workers of iniquity*. *Nothing that is unclean can enter* into heaven. He who is to receive us into those blessed mansions, hath declared it to be his immutable resolution and decree, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. And therefore, as ever we hope to see God in that happy and blessful state, we must *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God*; that having rendered ourselves as like him as we can in this world, we may be capable of the blessed sight and enjoyment of him in the other.

And as for the advantages in this world, let us not pursue them too eagerly: we may take the conveniences which fairly offer themselves to us, and be content to want what we cannot honestly have, and without going out of the way of our duty, considering that we are travellers, and that a little will serve for our passage and accommodation in our pilgrimage. And beyond that why should we so earnestly covet more, and trouble ourselves for that which is not necessary to our journey? Why should we at any time deal unjustly, to attain any of this world's goods? They will stand us in stead for so little a while, that we can have no temptation to injure or oppress any man, to break the peace of our consciences, and to wound our souls for the attaining of them. If the providence of God offer them to us, and bring them to our hands, in the use of honest diligence and lawful means; as we are not to refuse them, so neither are we to set our hearts upon them, nor to suffer our affections to be intangled in them.

The wisest use we can make of them, will be, to do like those who traffick in foreign parts, to consign our estates into our own native country; to send our treasures before us into the other world, that we may have the benefit of them when we come there. And this we may do by alms and charity. Whatever we spend upon the flesh, we leave behind us, and it will turn to no account to us in our own country. But whatever we lay out for the relief of the poor, is so much treasure laid

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out and ſecured to ourſelves againſt another day. So our bleſſed Saviour aſſures us, Luke xii. 33. that *giving of alms* is *providing for curſelves bags that wax not old, a treaſure in the heavens that faileth not.*

2. If we be *ſtrangers and pilgrims*, then it concerns us to behave ourſelves with great caution, and to live blameleſsly and inoffenſively; remembering that the eyes of people are upon us; and that thoſe among whom we ſojourn, will be very prying and curious, and narrow obſervers of our manners and carriage. They that are in a ſtrange country, are not wont to take that liberty and freedom which the natives of the place may do, but to keep a perpetual guard upon themſelves; knowing how ſtrictly they are obſerved, and that they live among thoſe who bear no good-will to them; and that every bad thing we do, reflects upon our nation, and is a reproach to the country to which we belong. *Ye are not of the world*, (ſays our Lord): *if ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but ye are not of the world; therefore the world hateth you.* Upon this account, the Apoſtle chargeth Chriſtians to be *harmleſs and blameleſs*, and as it becomes *the ſons of God* to be, *in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe nation, among whom we* ſhould *ſhine as lights.* The ſame argument St. Peter uſeth, 1 epiſt. ii. 11. 12. *I beſeech you as pilgrims and ſtrangers, to abſtain from fleſhly luſts; having your converſation honeſt among the Gentiles;* that is, conſidering that you are among ſtrangers and enemies, and therefore ought to be very careful to bring no ſcandal upon your holy profeſſion, among thoſe who will be ready to take all advantages againſt you. Particularly, we who pretend to the ſame heavenly country, muſt be kind to one another; and whilſt we live among ſtrangers, have no quarrels amongſt ourſelves. In a ſtrange country, it uſeth to be a mighty endearment of men to one another, that they are of the ſame country, and fellow-citizens; and this alone is commonly ſufficient to unite their affections, and to link their intereſts together. But how little of this is to be ſeen among Chriſtians! how ſhamefully do they quarrel among themſelves, in the midſt of enemies and ſtrangers! as if they had no relation to one another, and

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and never expected to meet at last in the same country, and there to live together for ever.

3. Let us be as patient and chearful as we can, under all the troubles and afflictions which we meet with in this life. They who are in strange countries, must expect to encounter many injuries and affronts, and to be put to great difficulties and hardships. Those which are lighter and more tolerable, we must bear with chearfulness. Upon a journey men use to put on all the pleasantness they can, and to make sport of all the inconveniences of the ways and weather, and little cross accidents that befal them. And thus, if we had but the art and wisdom to do it, many of the lesser inconveniences of human life might well enough be played off, and made matter rather of mirth and diversion, than of melancholy and serious trouble.

But there are some evils and calamities of human life, that are too heavy and serious to be jested withal, and require the greatest consideration, and a very great degree of patience to support us under them, and enable us to bear them decently; as the loss of friends and dearest relations; as the loss of an only son, grown up to be well fixed and settled in a virtuous course, and promising all the comfort to his parents that they themselves can wish: these certainly are some of the greatest evils of this world, and hardest to be borne. For men may pretend what they will to philosophy, and contempt of the world, and of the perishing comforts and enjoyments of it; to the extirpation of their passions, and an insensibility of these things, which the weaker and undisciplined part of mankind keep such a wailing and lamentation about: but when all is done, nature hath framed us as we are, and hath planted in our nature strong inclinations and affections to our friends and relations; and these affections are as naturally moved upon such occasions, and pluck every string of our hearts as violently, as extreme hunger and thirst do gnaw upon our stomachs.

And therefore it is foolish for any man to pretend to love things mightily, and to rejoice greatly in the enjoyment of them; and yet to be so easily contented to lose them, and to be parted from them. This is to se-

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parate things which nature hath ſtrongly linked together. Whatever we mightily love, does thereby, in ſome ſort, become part of ourſelves; and it cannot hang looſe to us, to be ſeparated and divorced from us without trouble; no more than a limb that is vitally and by ſtrong ligaments united to the body, can be lopped off when we pleaſe, or rent from the body without pain. And whoever pretends to have a mighty affection for any thing, and yet at the ſame time does pretend that he can contentedly, and without any great ſenſe or ſignification of pain, bear the loſs of it, does not talk like a philoſopher, but like an hypocrite; and under a grave pretence of being a wiſe, is in truth an ill-natured man. For moſt certainly, in proportion to our love of any thing, will be our trouble and grief for the loſs of it.

So that, under theſe great and heavier ſtrokes, we had need both of faith and patience. And indeed nothing but the firm belief of *a better country, that is, an heavenly*: of another life after this, and a bleſſed immortality in another world, is ſufficient to ſupport a man in the *few and evil days of his pilgrimage*, and to ſuſtain his ſpirit under the great evils and calamities of this life. But this fully anſwers all, that the afflictions and *ſufferings of this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us*: nay, that if we bear theſe afflictions patiently, and with a due ſubmiſſion to the will of God, eſpecially our ſufferings for his truth and cauſe, it will certainly increaſe our happineſs in the other world, and *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.

4. The conſideration of our preſent condition, and of our future hopes, ſhould ſet us above the fondneſs of life, and the ſlaviſh fears of death: for our minds will never be raiſed to their true pitch and height, till we have in ſome good meaſure conquered theſe two paſſions, and made them ſubject to our reaſon.

As for this preſent life, and the enjoyment of it, what is it that we ſee in them that ſhould make us ſo ſtrangely to dote upon them? *Quæ lucis miſeris tam dira cupido!* This world at the beſt is but a very indifferent place; and he is the wiſeſt man that bears himſelf towards

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wards it with the most indifferent mind and affection; that is always willing to leave it, and yet patient to stay in it as long as God pleaseth. And as for death, though the dread of it be natural, yet why should the terrors of it be so very surprising and amazing to us, after we have considered, that to a good and pious soul it is no other but the gate of heaven, and an entrance into eternal life? We are apt to wonder, to see a man undaunted at the approach of death, and to be not only contented, but chearful at the thoughts of his departure out of this world, this sink of sin, and vale of misery and sorrow. Whereas, if all things be duly considered, it is a greater wonder that men are so patient to live; and that they are not glad of any fair excuse and opportunity of getting out of this strange country, and retiring home, and of ridding themselves of the troubles and inconveniences of life. For, considering the numerous troubles and calamities we are liable to in a long pilgrimage, there are really but three considerations that I can readily think of, that can make this world, and our present condition in it, in any good measure tolerable to a wise man, *viz.* that God governs the world; that we are not always to stay in it; that there is a happiness designed and reserved for us in another place, which will abundantly recompense and make amends to us for all the troubles and sufferings of this life.

And yet it is strange to see how fast most men cling to life; and that, even in old age, how they catch at every twig that may but hold them up a little while; and how fondly they hanker after a miserable life, when there is nothing more of pleasure to be enjoyed, nothing more of satisfaction to be expected and hoped for in it. When they are just putting into the port, and one would think should rejoice at their very hearts that they see land; yet how glad would they be then of any cross wind, that would carry them back into the sea again, as if they loved to be tossed, and were fond of storms and tempests.

Nay, the very best of us, even after we have made that acknowledgment of David, *I am a stranger and a sojourner with thee, as all my fathers were*, are apt, with him, to be still importuning God for a little longer life:

O

O spare me a little, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more: and when God hath granted us this request, then we would be *spared* yet *a little longer.*

But let us remember, that God did not design us to continue always in this world; and that he hath on purpose made it so uneasy to us, to make us willing to leave it; and that so long as we linger here below, we are detained from our happiness: *While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord.* This consideration made St. Paul so *desirous to be dissolved,* because *he knew that when his earthly house of this tabernacle was dissolved, he should have* a much better habitation, *a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* This was that which made him so full of joy and triumph, at the thoughts of his leaving the world: 2 Tim. iv. 6. 7. 8. *I am now ready* (says he) *to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day.*

Nay, the consideration of this, though but obscurely apprehended by them, did raise the spirits of the wiser and better Heathen, and fill them with great joy and comfort at the thoughts of their dissolution. With what constancy and evenness of mind did Socrates receive the sentence of death! and with what excellent discourse did he entertain his friends just before he drank off the fatal cup, and after he had taken it down, whilst death was gradually seizing upon him! One can hardly, without a very sensible transport, read Cato's discourse concerning his death, as it is represented by Tully in his book of old age. "I am (says he) transported with "a desire of seeing my forefathers; those excellent per- "sons, of whom I have heard, and read, and written: "and, now I am going to them, I would not willingly "be drawn back into this world again." *Quòd si quis Deus mihi largiatur, ut ex hac ætate repuerescam, & in cunis vagiam, valdè recusem:* "If some God would of- "fer me, at this age, to be a child again, and to cry in "the cradle, I would earnestly refuse it, and upon no "terms accept it. And now that my race is almost "run,

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" run, and my course just finished, how loth should I " be to be brought back, and made to begin again? " For what advantage is there in life? Nay rather, " what labour and trouble is there not in it? But let " the benefit of it be what it will, there is certainly " some measure of life, as well as of other things; and " men ought to know when they have enough of " it." *O præclarum diem, cùm in illud animorum concilium cætumque proficiscar, & cùm ex hac turba & colluvione discedam!* " O blessed and glorious day, when I shall go " to that great council and assemby of spirits, and have " got out of this crowd and rabble!" And if a Heathen, who had but some obscure glimmerings of another life, and of the blessed state of departed souls, could speak thus chearfully of death; how much more may we, who have a clear and undoubted revelation of these things, and to whom *life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel?*

5. We should always prefer our duty, and the keeping of a good conscience, before all the world; because it is, in truth, infinitely more valuable, if so be our souls be immortal, and do survive in another world, and we must there give a strict account of all the actions done by us in this life, and receive the sentence of eternal happiness or misery, *according to the things done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.* For, as our Saviour argues concerning the case of denying him and his truth, to avoid temporal suffering and death, *what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* When we are tempted by temporal interest and advantage, or by the fear of present loss and suffering, to deny or dissemble our religion, to do any thing that is sinful in any kind, and contrary to our duty and conscience, let us ask ourselves, what will be the profit and advantage of it? What if, for fear of men, and what they can do to me, I incur the wrath and displeasure of almighty God? This is infinitely more to be dreaded; and his frowns are a thousand times more terrible, than the bittereſt wrath and cruelest malice of men. What if, to preserve this frail and mortal body, I shall evidently hazard the loss of my immortal

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immortal ſoul; and, to eſcape a temporal inconvenience, I forfeit everlaſting happineſs, and plunge myſelf into eternal miſery and ruin? would not this be a wild bargain, and a mad exchange, for any temporal gain and advantage, to loſe the things that are eternal? and for the pleaſing of ourſelves for a little while, to make ourſelves miſerable for ever?

If we confeſs ourſelves to be *ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth*, and are perſuaded of the promiſes of God concerning an *heavenly country*, where we hope to arrive after the *few and evil days of our pilgrimage* are over; let us not, by complying with the humours of ſtrangers, and the vitious cuſtoms and practices of an evil world, bar ourſelves of our hopes, and baniſh ourſelves from that happy place, to which we all profeſs we are going.

We pretend to be travelling towards heaven: but if we *make ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience*, we deſtroy our own hopes of ever arriving at that happy port. We do not live up to our expectation of a future happineſs, if the unſeen glories of another world do not raiſe us above all the temptations and terrors of ſenſe. Our faith and hope have not their due and proper influence upon us, if they do not govern our lives and actions, and make us ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of our holy religion, and in the conſcientious practice of it. St. Paul reaſoned himſelf into this holy reſolution, from the hopes of a bleſſed reſurrection, Acts xxiv. 15. 16. *I have hope* (ſays he) *toward God, that there ſhall be a reſurrection of the dead, both of the juſt and unjuſt.* Ἐν τούτῳ δέ, *For this cauſe therefore I exerciſe myſelf always to have a conſcience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*

6. and laſtly, If we be ſojourners and travellers in this world, we ſhould often think of our end, and carefully mind the way to it. Our end is everlaſting happineſs; and the direct way to it is, by a conſtant, and ſincere, and univerſal obedience to the laws and commandments of God. And this in itſelf is ſo plain a way, that a ſincere and honeſt man can hardly err in it. And therefore we muſt not ſuffer ourſelves to be led and trained out of it upon any pretence whatſoever; not by

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by the wildfire of pretended illuminations and enthusiasms; nor by the confident pretence of an infallible guide, that will needs shew us another way, and persuade us to follow him blindfold in it. Let us not quit the infallible rule of God's word, to follow any guide whatsoever. *If an apostle, or an angel from heaven, preach any other doctrine,* and way to heaven, *let him be accursed.* He who is *the way, and the truth, and the life,* when he was consulted with about the way to eternal happiness, knew no other but this. For when the young man asked him, *Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* his answer was, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* It is true indeed, that by reason of our corrupt inclinations within, and powerful temptations without, this way, especially at our first setting out, is rugged and difficult. So our Lord hath forewarned us, telling us, that *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and* that *there be few that find it;* therefore we should strive to enter in; take great care and pains to discern the right way, and to overcome the difficulties of our first entrance into it; and should often pray to God as David did, Psal. cxix. 19. *I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments from me.* Psal. cxxxix. 23. 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Thus, if we would always have our end in our eye, it would both be a direction to us in our way, and an encouragement to quicken our pace in it; there being no more powerful motive to a good life, than to be assured, that if *we have our fruit unto holiness, our end shall be everlasting life.*

SERMON

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SERMON LXX.

The preſence of the Meſſias, the glory of the ſecond temple.

HAG. ii. 6. 7. 8. 9.

For thus ſaith the Lord of hoſts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, and the dry land: and I will ſhake all nations, and the deſire of all nations ſhall come, and I will fill this houſe with glory, ſaith the Lord of hoſts. The ſilver is mine, and the gold is mine, ſaith the Lord of hoſts. The glory of this latter houſe ſhall be greater than of the former, ſaith the Lord of hoſts: and in this place will I give peace, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.

THE author of this prophecy was the firſt of the three Prophets which God ſent to the people of Iſrael after the captivity; and this prophecy contains ſeveral meſſages from God, to the princes, and elders, and people of Iſrael; in which he reproves their ſlackneſs and negligence in the building of the temple, and encourageth them thereto, by the promiſe of his aſſiſtance; and tells them, that however in reſpect of the magnificence of the building, and the rich ornaments of it, it ſhould be incomparably ſhort of Solomon's temple, (which ſome that were then alive had ſeen in its glory); yet, in other reſpects, it ſhould far excel it: for the time would come, that this ſecond temple ſhould be graced with the preſence of the Meſſias; which would be a greater glory to it, than all the riches of Solomon's temple.

And this is fully expreſſed in the words which I have read unto you: *Thus ſaith the Lord of hoſts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, and the dry land: and I will ſhake all nations, and the deſire of all nations ſhall come, and I will fill*

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fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

Now, that it is some very great thing which is here foretold and promised for the honour of this second temple, no man can doubt, that considers in what a solemn manner it is here expressed; this great and glorious title, THE LORD OF HOSTS, being no less than five several times used within the compass of these four verses; the like instance whereto is not perhaps in the whole Bible: *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth,* ℣ 6. *And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts,* ℣ 7. *The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts,* ℣ 8. And twice, ℣ 9. *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.* So that by the solemn manner of expressing it, we may imagine, that it is some very great thing which is spoken of, and such as the like had never been before. And such was the incarnation and coming of the Messias.

I know that the modern Jews will by no means have this text to be understood of the Messias: and not without cause; for he that is spoken of in the text, was to come into the second temple, which hath now been destroyed above 1600 years ago; and they do not believe the Messias to be yet come: and therefore, whatever shift they make, they must interpret this text of some other person than the Messias. But then it is plain for what reason they do so; it being evident from their own Talmud, that the ancient Jews did understand it of the Messias; but being hardened in their unbelief, they pervert all those texts whereby they might be convinced, that Jesus our blessed Saviour was the true Messias.

And indeed whoever carefully considers the several expressions and circumstances of this prediction, cannot understand it of any other. To make this evident, I shall explain the several expressions in the text. *Thus*

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saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while. Yet a little while; so it is in the Hebrew. *Yet once more;* so the LXX render it; and so it is quoted from the LXX in the New Testament, Heb. xii. 26.; and this sense the Hebrew word may likewise bear; and our translation of the text takes them both in, *Yet once, it is a little while.*

If we take the words in the first sense, *Yet a little while,* they signify, that God was then beginning those changes in the world, which were to precede and make way for the coming of the Messias. This indeed was not till about 400 years after: but, a great while before that time, God began those changes in the world, which were to prepare the way for his coming; and, considering the long time which was passed from the first promise made to Abraham, 400 years, in comparison of that, may seem but a little while. But I rather chuse the latter sense of this phrase, *Yet once more;* because the Hebrew will bear it, and because it is so quoted in the New Testament; as if the Prophet had said, that God had before done a great thing in the world, and accompanied with great miracles; *viz.* the giving of the law by Moses, which was attended with great commotions, both in Egypt, by bringing the people of Israel out from thence with a mighty hand, and by destroying the nations before them, whose land God gave them for a possession: but now he would do one greater thing more, the sending of the Messias, and the planting of his religion in the world; in order whereunto, there should be much greater, and more universal commotions and changes in the world, and more and greater miracles wrought; *Yet once more, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and I will shake all nations.* From which words the Apostle to the Hebrews argues the abolishing of the Jewish dispensation, and the bringing in of another that should be unalterable, Heb. xii. 27. *And this word, Yet once more,* (says the Apostle), *signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.* And this I shall have occasion to explain more fully in the following parts of this discourse.

Yet once more, I will shake the heavens and the earth, &c.

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&c. For the understanding whereof, we are to consider, that the Hebrews have no one word whereby to express the world; and therefore they do it by an enumeration of the principal parts of it. So, Gen. i. when Moses would express the creation of the world, he says, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* And so St. Peter, when he would express the revolution of all things after the universal conflagration of the world, calls it *a new heaven and a new earth*, 2 Pet. iii. 13. *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth;* that is, a new world, a quite other frame and state of things than that which we now see. And so the Prophet here in the text, to express the great commotions and changes that should be in the world before the coming of the Messias, says, that God *will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;* that is, he would cause great revolutions in the world; there should be great wars and confusions, and the empires of the world should pass from one hand to another. And thus we find this very expression interpreted, ℣ 21. 22. of this chapter, *I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations.* And to shew, that by *shaking the heavens and the earth*, is meant great changes in the world, and as it were an universal commotion of it, he adds in the text, by way of farther explication, *And I will shake all nations.*

And then it follows, *And the desire of all nations shall come.* This we (as the ancient Jews also did) take to be a plain character and description of the Messias; he is *the desire of all nations;* he whom all nations had reason to desire, because of those great blessings and benefits which he was to bring to the world. Thus interpreters generally understand these words; and it is very true the Messias was so: but this does not seem to be the true importance of this phrase; for the Hebrew word signifies *expectation* as well as *desire*, and so I should rather chuse to render it, *The expectation of all nations shall come;* which signifies, that about the time of the coming of the Messias, not only the Jews, but other nations, should be in a general expectation of some great prince

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then to appear; which was most eminently accomplished in our blessed Saviour, as I shall shew by and by.

And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts, speaking of the second temple, which was then in building; which, though it fell very much short of Solomon's, in point of state and magnificence, yet, by being honoured with the presence of the Messias, it should be much more glorious than Solomon's temple. *The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts:* not that God wanted the command of gold and silver to have made the second temple equal to Solomon's in outward glory and splendor; he could easily have made it so in that respect; and Josephus tells us, that not long before the time of our Saviour's coming, Herod had built and beautified it to that degree, that in some respects it excelled Solomon's; and of this some understand the next words, *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former;* namely, that this was accomplished in that beauty and magnificence which was added to it when it was re-edified by Herod the Great: but however that be, this is certain, that it was much more glorious in another respect; namely, that it entertained the Messias, *the* great *expectation* and blessing *of all nations.*

And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts. Some understand this of that universal peace which was throughout the world, when our Saviour was born, in the reign of Augustus Cæsar. Others with great probability interpret this of the Messias himself, who is called here by the name of *peace;* and so some of the ancient Jews understood it: *In this place will I give peace,* that is, the Messias. For the Hebrew word signifies all kind of happiness; and so it includes all those blessings and benefits, that happiness and salvation, which the Messias brought to the world. And this will appear very probable, if we consider, how frequently in scripture this title is given to the Messias. Is. ix. 6. he is called *the prince of peace;* and Zech. ix. 10. it is said of him, that *he should speak peace to the nations;* and the Apostle to the Hebrews parallels him with Melchisedek in this particular, that *he was king of Salem,* that is, *king of peace:* and, which is very little different from

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from this, he is frequently in scripture called *salvation*; which signifies the happiness of being rescued and delivered from all kind of evil; as *peace* signifies all kind of good, Is. xlix. 6. *I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my salvation unto the end of the earth.* And Luke ii. 30. when Simeon had our blessed Saviour in his arms, when he was first brought into the temple, he calls him *the salvation of God; Mine eyes* (saith he to God) *have seen thy salvation;* and John iv. 22. *Salvation is of the Jews;* that is, the Messias was to be of that nation. But, which is more express, Christ is called *our peace*, Eph. ii. 14. Nay, he is expressly called *peace*, or *the peace*, Micah v. 5. *And this man* (speaking of the Messias) *shall be the peace;* that is, one of his names or titles shall be *peace*. So that I make little doubt, but that in this expression in the text of *giving peace*, is meant giving the Messias; and that this is rendered as the reason why the glory of the second temple should be greater than of the first, because in that place the Messias should appear, and remarkably shew himself. God could have given this second temple, if he had thought fit, as much outward glory and beauty as that of Solomon's building; for *silver and gold are his*, and all the riches of the world are at his command: but he chose to put a far greater honour upon it than that of silver and gold, and to make it much more glorious in another respect; *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former; because in this place I will give* the Messias, the *peace*, and happiness, and salvation of mankind, and incomparably the greatest blessing that ever was given to the world.

The words being thus explained, it will now be more easy to shew how the several parts of this prediction do agree to our blessed Saviour, and to no other.

1. That there should be great changes and commotions in the world before his coming: *I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and I will shake all nations;* and then he should come.

2. That about the time of his coming, the world should be in a general expectation of him: *And the expectation of all nations shall come.*

3. That he should come during the continuance of

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the second temple; for it was his coming that should fill that house with glory, and in that place the Messias, who is called *peace*, is promised to be given: *And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.*

4. That this coming of the Messias should be the last dispensation of God for the salvation of men, and consequently should be perpetual and unalterable: *Yet once more, and I will shake the heavens and the earth. Yet once more;* from whence the Apostle to the Hebrews argues, that the gospel should be a perpetual and unalterable dispensation. Of these I shall speak severally, and as briefly as I can.

I. Here is a prediction of great changes and commotions in the world before the coming of the Messias: *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come;* plainly signifying hereby, that before the coming of the Messias, who is here called *the desire and expectation of all nations*, there should be very great commotions and changes in the world; that the empire of the world should be overturned: for so I have told you, that this expression of *shaking the heavens and the earth* is explained, ℣ 21. of this chapter, *I will shake the heavens and the earth, and will overthrow the throne of kingdoms.* And this was fulfilled in a most remarkable manner, between the time of this prophecy, and the coming of our blessed Saviour; during which time (though it was but four hundred years) there happened greater commotions and much more considerable revolutions in the great kingdoms of the world, than had done in above two thousand years before, and in almost one thousand seven hundred years since: so that it is no wonder that the prediction of these things is by God himself expressed in so very solemn a manner, as I observed before.

At the time of this prophecy, the empire of the world was newly translated from the Assyrians to the Medes and Persians; and not long after, the Grecians, under Alexander the Great, quite overthrew the Persian empire, and that by as sudden a change as was ever perhaps made in the world, possessing themselves by so swift and speedy a conquest of a great part of the then known world,

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world, as if to pass through it, and to conquer it, had been all one.

After the death of Alexander, the empire of the Grecians was shared among his great captains; whom the Romans by degrees conquered, besides a great many other kingdoms which Alexander never saw, and some of them perhaps had never heard of. And at last the empire of the world, in all its greatness and glory, was possessed by Augustus, in whose time our blessed Saviour was born.

So that here were mighty commotions in the world, wonderful changes of kingdoms and empires, before the coming of the Messias; far greater, and of much larger extent, than those that were in Egypt and Palestine, at the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and the giving of the law from Mount Sinai. And these did not only go before the coming of the Messias, but they made way for the more easy propagating of his doctrine and religion: for the Grecians, and especially the Romans, settled their conquests in such a manner, as in a good measure to propagate their language among the nations which they conquered; and particularly the Romans did make the ways for travel and commerce much more easy and commodious than ever they were before, by employing their armies, when they had no other work, to make high-ways, for the convenience of passage from the station of one legion to another; the benefit and effect whereof we in England enjoy to this day, (a pattern to all princes and states that have necessary occasion for armies how to employ them): and this very thing proved afterwards a mighty advantage for the more easy and speedy spreading of Christianity in the world.

II. Another part of this prophecy is, that, about the time of the coming of the Messias, the world should be in a general expectation of him: *And the expectation of all nations shall come.* And I doubt not but this character of the Messias is taken out of that famous prophecy concerning him, Gen. xlix. 10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah till Shiloh come*, (and by *Shiloh* the ancient Jews generally understood the Messias), *and to him shall the gathering of the people be*; or, as it is rendered by the Septuagint, and several other translations, *and he shall be the*

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the expectation of the nations. In allusion to which ancient prophecy concerning him, he is here in the text called *the expectation of all nations;* and so by the Prophet Malachi, chap. iii. 1. *And the Lord whom ye expect,* (or look for), *shall suddenly come into his temple.* Now, this part of the prediction in the text was most eminently fulfilled in our blessed Saviour. For about the time of his coming, the Jews were in a general expectation of him; as appears not only from that ancient and general tradition of theirs, from the school of Elias, that at the end of the second two thousand years of the world the Messias should come, (and our blessed Saviour's coming did accordingly happen at that time); but likewise from that particular computation of the Jewish doctors, not long before our Saviour's coming, who, upon a solemn debate of the matter, did determine that the Messias would come within fifty years. And this is farther confirmed from the great jealousy which Herod had concerning a King of the Jews, that was expected to be born about that time; and from that remarkable testimony in Josephus, who tells us, that "the Jews rebelled against "the Romans, being encouraged thereto by a famous pro"phecy in their scriptures, that about that time a great "prince should be born among them, that should rule "the world." And Josephus flattered Vespasian so far, as to make him believe that he was the man; and thereupon persuaded him to destroy the line of David, out of which the tradition was, that the Messias should spring; as if the accomplishment of a divine prediction could be hindered by any human endeavour.

And this was not only the general expectation of the Jews about that time, but of a great part of the world; as appears from those two famous testimonies of two of the most eminent Roman historians, Suetonius and Tacitus. The words of Suetonius are these: *Percrebuerat oriente toto vetus & constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut Judææ profecti rerum potirentur:* "There was an ancient and "general opinion, famous throughout all the Eastern "parts, that the fates had determined, that there should "come out of Judea those that should govern the "world;" and he adds what I quoted before out of Josephus, *Id Judæi ad se trahentes, rebellârunt:* "That "the

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" the Jews taking this to themselves, did thereupon re-
" bel." Now, it is very remarkable, that the very words of this tradition seem to be a verbal translation of that prophecy in Micah, That *out of Judah should come the governor: Ut Judæâ profecti rerum potirentur.* The other testimony is out of Tacitus; and his words are these, (*lib.* 21. § 13.), *Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum libris contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret oriens, profectique Judæâ rerum potirentur:* " A great
" many (says he) were possessed with a persuasion, that
" it was contained in the ancient books of the priests,
" that at that very time the East should prevail, and that
" they who should govern the world were to come out
" of Judea." By *the ancient books of the priests*, he, in all probability, means *the ancient prophecies of scripture:* for the last expression is the same with that of Suetonius, taken out of the Prophet Micah; and the other, *that the East should prevail*, does plainly refer to that title given to the Messias by the Prophet Zachary, chap. vi. 12. where he is called *the man whose name is* TZEMACH, which signifies *Oriens* and *Germen*, both *the East* and *a Branch;* our translation hath it, *the man whose name is the Branch;* but it might as well be rendered, *the man whose name is the East.* Thus you see this character of our Saviour in this prophecy most literally fulfilled, that he was *the expectation of all nations.* I proceed to the

III. Third circumstance of this prediction, that he who is here foretold should come during the continuance of this second temple; because it was his presence that should *fill that house with glory:* and it was *in that place* that the Messias, who is called *the peace*, is promised to *be given; And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.* And this is likewise most expressly foretold by the Prophet Malachi, chap. iii. 1. *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye look for, shall suddenly come into his temple; even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.* And accordingly Jesus our blessed Saviour came during the second temple; he was presented there by his parents, and owned by Simeon for the Messias; he disputed there, and taught frequently there, and by his pre-

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sence *filled that house with glory.* For that the Son of God taught publickly there, was a greater honour to it, than all the silver and gold of Solomon's temple.

And not long after his death (according to his express prediction) this second temple was destroyed to the ground; *so that not one stone of it was left upon another.* And when, some hundred of years after, it was attempted to be rebuilt three several times, the last whereof was by Julian the Apostate, in opposition to Christianity, and to our Saviour's prediction, fire came out of the foundation, and destroyed the workmen; so that they desisted in great terror, and durst never attempt it afterwards. And this not only the Christian writers of that age, in great numbers, do testify, but Ammianus Marcellinus, a Heathen historian who lived in that time, does also give us a very particular account of this memorable matter. So that if by *the expectation of the nations* be here meant the Messias, (as I have plainly shewn), then he is long since come, and was no other than Jesus our blessed Saviour, who, according to this prophecy, was to *fill the second temple with glory;* which hath now been demolished above one thousand six hundred years ago, and the rebuilding whereof hath been so often and so remarkably hindered from heaven. The consideration of all which were sufficient to convince the Jews of their vain expectation of a Messias yet to come, were they not so obstinately rooted and fixed in their infidelity. There remains now the

IV. Fourth and last circumstance of this prophecy, *viz.* That the coming of the Messias was to be the last dispensation of God for the salvation of men, and, consequently, was to be perpetual and unchangeable: *Yet once more, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the expectation of all nations shall come. Yet once more;* from which words the Apostle to the Hebrews argues the perpetuity of the gospel, and that it was the dispensation which should never be changed, Heb. xii. 27. *And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things which are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken, may remain:* and then it follows, *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved,*

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moved, &c. It was usual with the Jews to describe the times of the gospel by *the kingdom of the Messias*: and accordingly the Apostle here calls the dispensation of the gospel, *a kingdom which cannot be moved*; in opposition to the law, which was an imperfect and alterable dispensation. For this is plainly the scope of the Apostle's reasoning, namely, to convince the Jews that they were now under a more gracious and perfect dispensation than that of the law, ℣ 18. *Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire*; meaning mount Sinai, which was a sensible literal mountain, *a mountain that might be touched*, in opposition to the mystical and spiritual mount Zion, by which the dispensation of the gospel is described: which, by the way, prevents the objection of its being called *the mountain that might be touched*, when it was forbidden to be touched upon pain of death: *Ye are not come to the mount that might be touched*; that is, I am not now speaking of a literal and sensible mountain, such as was mount Sinai, from whence the law was given; but of that spiritual and heavenly dispensation of the gospel, which was typified by mount Zion and by Jerusalem: *But ye are come to mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.* And then he cautions them to take heed how they reject him that came from heaven to make this last revelation of God to the world, which, because of the clearness and perfection of it, should never need to receive any change, ℣ 25. 26. *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth*, (*viz.* Moses, who delivered the law from mount Sinai), *much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven; whose voice then shook the earth*, (alluding to the earthquake at the giving of the law): *but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven*; that is, the whole world, in order to the coming of the Messias, and the planting of the gospel in the world: and then he argues from the words *once more*, that the former dispensation should be removed, to make way for that which should perpetually remain.

And indeed there is no need of any farther revelation after

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after this, nor of any change of that religion which was brought from heaven by the Son of God; because of the perfection of it, and its fitness to reform the world, and to recover mankind out of their lapsed and degenerate condition, and to bring them to happiness; both by the purity of its doctrine, and the power of its arguments, to work upon the minds of men, by the clear discovery of the mighty rewards and punishments of another world.

And now, the proper inference from all this discourse is the very same with that which the Apostle makes, from the consideration of the perfection and excellency of this revelation, which God had made to the world by his Son. *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for how shall we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven?* and at the 28th verse of that chapter, *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear;* that is, let us live as becomes those to whom God hath made so clear and perfect a revelation of his will. We have all the advantages of the divine revelation which the world ever had, and the last and most perfect that the world ever shall have. We have not only *Moses and the prophets,* but that doctrine which the Son of God came down from heaven on purpose to declare to the world. God hath vouchsafed to us that clear and compleat revelation of his will, which he denied to *many prophets and righteous men, who desired to see the things which we see, but could not see them; and to hear the things which we hear, but could not hear them.* There were good men in the world under those imperfect revelations which God made to them; but we have far greater advantages, and more powerful arguments to be good than ever they had. And as we ought thankfully to acknowledge these blessed advantages, so ought we likewise, with the greatest care and diligence, to improve them.

And now, how does the serious consideration of this condemn all impenitent sinners under the gospel, who will not be reclaimed from their sins, and persuaded to goodness, by all that God can do; by the most plain declaration of his will to the world; by the most perfect precepts

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precepts and directions for a good life; by the most encouraging promises to obedience, and by the most severe threatenings of an eternal and unutterable ruin, in case of disobedience; by *the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*; by the terrors of the great day, and the vengeance of eternal fire; by the wonderful and amazing condescension of the Son of God appearing in our nature; by his merciful undertaking for the redemption of lost and sinful man; by his cruel sufferings for our sins, and by the kindest offers of pardon and reconciliation in his blood, and by the glorious hopes of eternal life?

What could God have done more for us than he hath done? What greater concernment could he shew for our salvation, than to *send his own Son, his only Son, to seek and save us?* and what greater demonstration could he give of his love to us, than to *give the Son of his love to die for us?* This is the last effort that the divine mercy and goodness will make upon mankind. So the Apostle tells us, in the beginning of this epistle, chap. i. 1. that *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.* And if we will not hear him, he will speak no more. After this it is not to be expected that he should make any farther attempts for our recovery: he can send no greater and dearer person to us than *his own Son.* If we despise him, whom will we reverence? If we reject him, and the great salvation which he brings and offers to us, we have all the reason in the world to believe that our case is desperate, and that we shall *die in our sins. This* was *the condemnation* of the Jews, that *they did not receive and believe on him whom God had sent.* And if we who profess to believe on him, and to receive his doctrine, be found disobedient to it in our lives, we have reason to fear that our condemnation shall be far-heavier than theirs: for, since the appearance of the Son of God for the salvation of men, *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*, especially against those *who detain the truth of God in unrighteousness*; that is, against those who entertain the light of God's truth in their minds, but do not

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suffer it to have its proper effect and influence upon their hearts and lives, and make that a prisoner which would make them free. So our Lord tells us, that *the truth shall make us free*; but if, after *we have received the knowledge of the truth*, we are still *the servants of sin*, our condemnation is much worse than if the Son of God had never come: for the Christian religion hath done nothing, if it do not take men off from their sins, and teach them to live well.

Especially at this time, when we are celebrating *the coming of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil*, we should take great head, that we be not found guilty of any impiety or wickedness; because this is directly contrary to the main design of *the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, and hath appeared to all men*, (and the appearance whereof we do at this time commemorate); for that *teacheth men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*. And we cannot gratify the devil more, than by shewing ourselves more diligent than ordinary to uphold his works at this very time, when *the Son of God was manifested* on purpose *to dissolve them*. We cannot possibly chuse a worse, a more improper season to sin in, than when we are celebrating the birth of the blessed Jesus, who came to *save us from our sins*. This is, as if a sick man, for joy that a famous physician is come to his house, should run into all manner of excess, and so do all he can to inflame his disease, and make his case desperate. Not but that our inward joy may lawfully be accompanied with all outward innocent expressions of it; but we cannot be truly thankful, if we allow ourselves at this time in any thing contrary to the purity and sobriety of the gospel. It is matter of just and sad complaint, being of great scandal to our Saviour, and his holy religion, that such irregular and extravagant things are at this time commonly done by many who call themselves Christians, and done under a pretence of doing honour to the memory of Christ's birth; as if, because the Son of God was at this time made man, it were fit for men to make themselves beasts.

If we would honour him indeed, we must take care, that our joy do not degenerate into sin and sensuality, and

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and that we do not express it by lewdness and luxury, by intemperance and excess, by prodigal gaming, and profuse wasting of our estates, *as the manner of some is*; as if we intended literally to requite our Saviour, *who being rich, for our sakes became poor.* This is a way of *parting with houses and land, and becoming poor for his sake*, for which he will never thank nor reward us. This is not to commemorate the coming of our Saviour, but to contradict it; and openly to declare that we will uphold *the works of the devil*, in despite of the Son of God, who *came to destroy them.* It is for all the world like that lewd and senseless piece of loyalty, too much in fashion some years ago, of being drunk for the King. Good God! that ever it should pass for a piece of religion among Christians, to run into all manner of excess for twelve days together in honour of our Saviour! A greater aggravation of sin cannot easily be imagined, than to abuse the memory of the greatest blessing that ever was, Christ coming into the world to take away sin, into an opportunity of committing it. This is to represent the Son of God as a patron of sin and licentiousness, and to treat him more contumeliously than the Jews did, who bowed the knee to him, and mocked him, and called him *King*, and spat upon him; and, under a pretence of rejoicing for his birth, to *crucify to ourselves afresh the Lord of life and glory, and to put him to an open shame.*

I will conclude all with the Apostle's exhortation, Rom. xiii. 12. 13. 14. *Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk decently as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

Now, to our most gracious and merciful God, the great friend and lover of souls, who regarded us in our low and lost condition, and cast an eye of pity upon us, when *we were in our blood, and no other eye pitied us*; and when we had lost and ruined ourselves, was pleased, in tender compassion to mankind, to *send his only begotten Son into the world, to seek and save us*; and, by the pu-

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rity of his doctrine, and the pattern of his life, and the sacrifice of his death, to purchase eternal life for us, and to direct and lead us in the way to it: and to him also, the blessed Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, who came down from heaven, that he might carry us thither; and took human nature upon him, that we thereby might be *made partakers of a divine nature*; and *humbled himself to death, even the death of the cross*, that he might exalt us to glory and honour; and, whilst we were bitter enemies to him, gave such a demonstration of his love to us, as never any man did to his best friend: *Unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain; to God, even our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth; to him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and honour, dominion and power, now and for ever. Amen.*

SERMON LXXI.

Christ Jesus the only mediator between God and men.

Preached at St. Peter's, Cornhill, on the feast of the annunciation 1691.

1 TIM. ii. 5. 6.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all.

The second sermon on this text. The 48th is the first.

THese words contain in them these four propositions; three of them express, and the fourth of them sufficiently implied in the text.

1. That *there is one God.*

2. That

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2. That there is *one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus.*

3. That he *gave himself a ransom for all.*

4. That the mediation or intercession of Jesus Christ is founded in the redemption of mankind. For this seems to be the reason why it is added, that he *gave himself a ransom for all*, to signify to us, that because he *gave himself a ransom for all*, therefore he interceeds for all. In virtue of that sacrifice which he offered to God for the salvation of men, he offers up our prayers to God; and therefore it is acceptable to him, that we should *pray for all men.* This seems to be the true connexion of the Apostle's discourse, and the force of his reasoning, about our putting up publick prayers for all men.

I have, in a former discourse, [*serm.* 48.], handled the first of these. I proceed now to the

Second, That there is *one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. One mediator*, that is, *but one*; for the expression is the very same concerning *one God*, and *one mediator*: and therefore, if the Apostle when he says, *There is one God*, certainly means, that there is *but one God*, it is equally certain, that when he says, *There is one mediator between God and men*, he means, there is *but one mediator*, viz. *Christ Jesus.* He is the only mediator between God and men.

In the handling of this argument, I shall proceed in this method.

1. I shall endeavour to shew, that God hath appointed but one mediator, or advocate, or intercessor in heaven for us; in whose name, and by whose mediation and intercession, we are to offer up our prayers and services to God.

2. That this is most agreeable to one main end and design of the Christian religion, and of our Saviour's coming into the world.

3. That it is likewise evident, from the nature and reason of the thing itself, that there is but *one mediator* and intercessor in heaven for us, to offer up our prayers to God; and that there can be no more. And then,

4. and lastly, I shall endeavour to shew, how contrary to the doctrine of the Christian religion, concerning *one mediator* and intercessor in heaven for us, the doc-

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ctrine and practice of the church of Rome in this matter is, in their invocation of angels, and the blessed virgin, and the saints, and making use of their mediation and intercession with God for sinners; as likewise how contrary it is to the doctrine and practice of the primitive Christian church: and then I shall answer their several pretences for this doctrine and practice; and shew that this practice is not only needless, but useless and unprofitable; and not only so, but very dangerous and impious.

I. I shall endeavour to shew, that God hath appointed but one mediator, or advocate, or intercessor, in heaven for us; in whose name, and by whose intercession, we are to offer up all our prayers and services to God.

Besides that it is expresly said here in the text, *There is but one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*, and that the scripture no where mentions any other: I say, besides this, we are constantly directed to offer up our prayers and thanksgivings, and to perform all acts of worship in his name, and no other; and with a promise, that the prayers and services which we offer in his name, will be graciously answered and accepted: John xiv. 13. 14. *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do; that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* And chap. xvi. 23. 24. *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing: Verily verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. In that day;* that is, when I have left the world, and am gone to my Father; as he explains it at the 28th verse. *In that day ye shall ask me nothing;* but *whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you;* that is, you shall not need to address your prayers to me, but to my Father in my name. And ver. 26. 27. *At that day ye shall ask in my name;* (that is, from the time that I am ascended into heaven, ye shall put up all your prayers and requests to God in my name); *and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you;* that is, I need not tell you, though I shall certainly do it,

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it, that I will intercede with the Father for you; for he of himself is kindly disposed and affected towards you, for my sake: *The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me.*

St. Paul likewise commands Christians to perform all acts of religious worship in the name of Christ, Col. iii. 16. 17. *Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.* And this precept of addressing all our prayers and thanksgivings to God by Jesus Christ, as the only mediator between God and us, is the more remarkable, because it is given in opposition to the worshipping of God by any other mediators and intercessors in heaven for us; and to that superstition which had begun so early to prevail among some Christians at Colosse and Laodicea, of worshipping God by the mediation and intercession of angels, against which he had cautioned in the former chapter, ℣ 18. 19. *Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels; not holding the head:* intimating, that for Christians to address themselves to God by any other mediator but Jesus Christ only, was a defection from Christ *the head*, and *high priest of our profession.* And that this is the Apostle's meaning, Theodoret assures us, in his comment upon this place; where he tells us, that some who maintained an observance of the law, together with the gospel, asserted also, "that angels were to be wor-"shipped," saying, "that the law was given by them." And this custom, he tells us, remained a long time in Phrygia and Pisidia; and that upon this account it was, that the synod of Laodicea in Phrygia, about the middle of the fourth century, forbad Christians, by a law, to pray to angels. And yet more expressly, in his comment upon those words, chap. iii. 17. *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him:* For "because "(says he) they (meaning those of whom St. Paul "warns the Colossians to beware, because they) did "command men to worship angels, he injoins the con-"trary; that they should adorn both their words and "actions with the memory (or mention) of the name

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" of Christ their Lord: and send ye up (saith he) " thanksgiving to God and the Father by him, and not " by the angels." And then he makes mention of the canon of the synod of Laodicea; " which (says he) in " pursuance of this rule, and being desirous to cure " that old disease, made it a law, that none should " pray unto angels, nor forsake the Lord Jesus Christ." It seems then that some relicks of that impious custom, of praying to angels, which Theodoret here calls *that old disease*, had continued from St. Paul's time, to the council of Laodicea; which was the occasion of that severe canon then made about that matter: the very words whereof I will set down, because they are remarkable, *viz.* " That Christians ought not to forsake the church " of God, and go away from it, and to invocate an- " gels, and to make conventicles; all which are for- " bidden. If any therefore be found giving himself to " this secret idolatry, let him be anathema; because he " hath forsaken our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, " and is gone over to idolatry." What shall be said to them, who do not only secretly, and in their private devotions, but in the publick assemblies of Christians, and in the most publick offices of their church, invocate angels, and pray to them? So that it was praying to angels, or making use of them as mediators and intercessors with God for us, which St. Paul here reproves so severely in the Colossians, as a defection from Christ and the Christian religion.

And indeed, considering how frequently the scripture speaks of Christ as our *only way to God*, and *by whom alone we have access to the throne of grace*, we cannot doubt but that God hath constituted him our only mediator and intercessor, by whom we are to address all our requests to God. John xiv. 6. Jesus there saith unto Thomas, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. I am the way, and the truth, and the life;* that is, the true and living way to the Father; which the Apostle calls *a new and living way*, Heb. x. 19. 20. *Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us. No man cometh to the Father but by me;* that is, we can have no access to God

God by prayer, or by any other acts of religious worship, but by him. So St. Paul tells us, Eph. ii. 18. *For through him* (speaking of Christ) *we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father. We both*; that is, both Jews and Gentiles. Under the law, the Jews had access to God by their High Priest, who interceded with God, and offered up prayers in behalf of the people; the Gentiles, they addressed themselves to God by innumerable mediators, by angels, and the souls of their departed heroes, which were the Pagan saints: instead of all these, God hath appointed one mediator and intercessor in heaven for us, Jesus the Son of God; and by him all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, *have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

And we have no need of any other, as the Apostle to the Hebrews reasons, chap. vii. 24. 25. *But this person*, (speaking of Christ), *because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood; ἀπαράβατον, a priesthood which doth not pass from one to another*, as the the priesthood under the law did, when, upon the death of one High Priest, another succeeded in his place: but our High Priest under the gospel, *since he abides for ever, is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* So that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient mediator, and able to carry on and accomplish the work of our salvation from first to last. And as we do not find that God hath appointed any other; so we are sure, that there needs no other, *since he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him, and that he lives for ever to make intercession for them.*

II. I proceed now, in the second place, to shew, that this doctrine or principle of *one mediator between God and men*, is most agreeable to one main end and design of the Christian religion, and of our Saviour's coming into the world; which was, to destroy idolatry out of the world; which St. John calls *the works of the devil*, 1 epist. iii. 8. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy, ἵνα λύσῃ, that he might dissolve*, or *demolish, the works of the devil:* by which St. John does more especially mean the idolatrous worship of the Heathen, which consisted in the multitude of their gods, and the

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the bloody and barbarous rites and sacrifices whereby they worshipped them; and likewise in the multitude of their mediators between the gods and men, who were also esteemed by them an inferior sort of deities. Both these kinds of idolatry had strangely prevailed, and overrun the world before the appearance of our Lord and Saviour; who came on purpose to deliver mankind from the horrible superstition and slavery of the worship of false gods, to pull down this kingdom of the devil, and to demolish that fabrick which he had been so long a rearing, and to beat him out of those strong holds, which he thought had been impregnable.

God indeed gave some check to these many ages before, and not long after their first appearance, by the Jewish religion; which was on purpose introduced, and confirmed, and established by so many and such mighty miracles, to preserve and keep alive in the world the primitive tradition and belief of *the one true God;* and likewise to be, as it were, some shadow and rude draught of that more perfect dispensation of the Christian religion; which, *by one sacrifice once offered,* and by *one mediator between God and men,* was, to put an end to the infinite superstitions of the Heathen worship, and all the bloody and barbarous rites of it; and likewise to the idolatry they were guilty of, in the worship of their inferior deities, whom they looked upon as a middle sort of powers between the gods and men; and therefore addressed themselves to them, as mediators between the superior and heavenly gods, and men here on earth. This was plainly one of the great designs of the Christian religion; and therefore it concerns Christians to understand it, and to be very careful that they do not suffer themselves to be deluded by any specious pretences whatsoever, to bring these things back again into the Christian religion, for the ruin and extirpation whereof it was purposely designed and intended.

And this seems plainly to be the meaning of that caution wherewith St. John concludes his catholick or general epistle, namely, that Christians should be very careful that they were not carried back again into the Heathen idolatry, by the confident pretences of the Gnostick hereticks to higher degrees of knowledge and illumination than

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than other Christians had; that is, by their pretending to be the infallible church, and the only true and genuine Christians. For it is against this sect that this epistle is plainly designed, which St. John thus concludes, chap. v. from ℣ 18. to the end: *We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not;* (meaning that he doth not commit *the sin unto death*, which he had spoken of just before, *viz.* apostasy from Christianity to the Heathen idolatry, or that which was very like it): *whosoever is born of God*, doth not commit this sin; *but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not*; (that is, he preserveth himself from the contagion of idolatry, into which the devil was so busy to seduce mankind). *And we know that we are of God*; (that is, do belong to the true God, and are worshippers of him): *and the whole world lieth in wickedness*; ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται, *is in the power*, or *under the dominion of that wicked one*; (that is, the greatest part of mankind was sunk into idolatry, and the worship of the devil). *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true. We know*; that is, we Christians are better taught by the Christian religion, to acknowledge and worship the only true God. *And we are in him that is true, in* or *by his son Jesus Christ*; that is, we worship the only true God by his Son Jesus Christ. And then he concludes, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols*; intimating hereby, that the worshipping of any other besides this only true God, and by any other mediator than Jesus Christ, is idolatry.

There were indeed two very ancient and common notions, both amongst Jews and Gentiles, of the original whereof it is hard to give any certain account; only this is certain, that they did prevail very early, and did very generally possess mankind: and they were these. First, That God was not to be appeased towards sinners, merely upon their repentance, without the death and suffering of some other in their stead; and that God would accept of this vicarious punishment and suffering instead of the death of the sinner himself. And this seems to have given the original to the sacrifices of living creatures, to appease the wrath of God towards sinners; which, in process of time, as the worship of false gods prevailed in the

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the world, did proceed to that degree of superstition and barbarous inhumanity, that, by the instigation of the devil, men offered up the blood of their children, and sacrificed their sons and daughters, to their idols and false gods. Secondly, Another common notion, which had likewise possessed mankind, was, That God was not to be immediately approached by sinful men; but that their prayers were to be offered up to the Deity by certain mediators and intercessors, that were to procure for them the favour of the gods, and the gracious answer and acceptance of their prayers. And this was the original of that other sort of Heathen idolatry, which consisted in the worship of the demons and heroes; that is, of angels, and souls departed, *viz.* of such eminent persons as had been great benefactors to mankind, and, for their worthy deeds upon earth, were canonized, and translated into the number of the inferior gods. By these, as the chief courtiers and favourites of heaven, they addressed their prayers and supplications to the superior gods.

Now, with these notions, which had generally possessed mankind, how imperfect soever, God was pleased to comply so far, as in the frame of the Jewish religion, which was designed for a type of the more perfect institution of the Christian religion, and a preparation for it; I say, God was pleased to comply so far with these notions, as to appoint sacrifices to be slain and offered up for the sinner; and likewise an High Priest, that once a year should enter into the holy of holies, with the blood of sacrifices that were offered up for the people, to make expiation for them; and, in virtue of that blood, should interceed for the people; as the Apostle to the Hebrews does declare at large. And when *God sent his Son in the fulness of time*, he was pleased likewise, in the dispensation of the gospel, that perfect institution which was never to be altered, to have so much regard to these common notions and apprehensions of mankind, as to provide for the supply of those two great wants, which they seemed always to have laboured under, and concerning which they were at so great a loss, *viz.* an effectual expiatory sacrifice for sins upon earth, and a powerful mediator and intercessor with God in heaven: and both these by the same person, Jesus Christ, who *appeared in the end of the*

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the world to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and, in the merit and virtue of that sacrifice, *appearing in heaven in the presence of God for us*, is become a perpetual advocate and a most powerful intercessor with God in heaven for us. So that instead of the endless sacrifices of the Jewish religion, which were ineffectual to the real expiation of sin, and only types and shadows of the true expiatory sacrifice, and instead of the bloody and inhumane sacrifices of the Heathen idolatry; the Son of God hath, *by one sacrifice for sin once offered, perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and obtained eternal redemption for us.* And instead of the mediation of angels, and the souls of their departed heroes, which the Heathen made use of to offer up their prayers to the gods, we have *one mediator between God and men*, appointed by God himself, Jesus the Son of God, who in our nature is ascended into heaven, *to appear in the presence of God for us.* And who so fit to be our patron and advocate, as he who was our sacrifice and propitiation?

Thus the method of our redemption, as it was by the wisdom of God admirably suited to the common apprehensions of mankind, concerning the necessity of a sacrifice to make expiation of sin, and of a mediator to intercede with God for sinners; so was it likewise excellently fitted, not only to put an end to the Jewish sacrifices, but likewise to abolish the barbarous sacrifices and rites of the Heathen idolatry, and to cashier that infinite number of mediators and intercessors by whom they addressed their prayers to the Deity; and, instead of all this, to introduce a more reasonable and spiritual worship, more agreeable to the nature and perfections of God, and the reason of mankind; which was one of the main and principal designs of the Christian religion. And therefore to bring in any other mediators, to intercede in heaven for us, whether angels or saints, and by them to offer up our prayers to God, is directly contrary to the design of the Christian religion.

III. It is likewise evident from the nature and reason of the thing itself, that there is but *one mediator* and intercessor in heaven, who offers up our prayers to God, and that there can be no more: because under the gospel there being but one High Priest, and but one sacrifice

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once offered for sin; and intercession for sinners being founded in the merit and virtue of the sacrifice by which expiation for sin is made, there can be no other mediator of intercession, but he who hath made expiation of sin, by a sacrifice offered to God for that purpose. And this Jesus Christ only hath done. He is both our High Priest and our sacrifice; and therefore he only, in the merit and virtue of that sacrifice which he offered upon earth, can interceed in heaven for us, and offer up our prayers to God. Others may pray to God for us; as our brethren upon earth do, and perhaps the angels and saints in heaven: but none of these can offer up our prayers to God, and procure the acceptance of them; for that can only be done in virtue of a sacrifice first offered, and by him that offered it; this being the peculiar office and qualification of a *mediator* or *intercessor*, properly so called.

It is the plain design of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, to prove that Christ is our only mediator in heaven, in virtue of that sacrifice for sin which he offered upon earth; and that he alone *appears in the presence of God for us*, to present our requests to him, and obtain a gracious answer to them: and he shews at large, how this was particularly typified by the Jewish High Priest, who upon the great day of expiation, after the sacrifice was slain without, *entered alone into the holy of holies, with the blood of the sacrifices*, in virtue whereof he *made intercession for the people*. Answerably to this, Jesus, *the high priest of our profession, offered himself a sacrifice* for the sins of men; and, in virtue of that sacrifice, is *entered into the high place not made with hands*, that is, *into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us*; where *he lives for ever to make intercession for us*, in virtue of that *eternal redemption* which *he hath obtained for us*, by the price of his blood; as the Apostle declares in several chapters of that epistle. So that this intercession being founded in the merit of a sacrifice, which he alone offered, he is of necessity the only *mediator between God and men*.

And for this reason it is, that the mediation and intercession of Christ is so frequently in scripture mentioned together with the expiation which he made for the sins of men, or, which is the same, with the price which he

paid

paid for the redemption of mankind; becauſe the one is founded in the other, and depends upon it. So we find 1 John ii. 1. 2. *If any man ſin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our ſins; and not for ours only, but alſo for the ſins of the whole world.* And here likewiſe in the text, *There is one mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus; who gave himſelf a ranſom for all:* therefore the only *mediator between God and men*, becauſe he only *gave himſelf a ranſom for all* men; the efficacy and prevalency of his mediation being founded in the merit and virtue of the ranſom of his blood.

And the force of theſe texts, and the reaſoning from them, is not to be avoided and turned off, by diſtinguiſhing between a mediator of redemption and of interceſſion; and by ſaying, that it is true, that Chriſt is the only mediator of redemption, but there may be many mediators of interceſſion: for if the force of his being advocate or interceſſor be founded in the virtue of his ranſom and propitiation, as I have plainly ſhewn, to the conviction of any that are not ſtrongly prejudiced, and that will read and conſider what the ſcripture ſays in this matter without prepoſſeſſion; then it is plain, that none can be a proper mediator of interceſſion, but he that paid the price of our redemption. So that the mediator of our redemption, and our mediator of interceſſion, muſt of neceſſity be one and the ſame perſon; and none can appear in the quality of our *advocate with the Father*, but he only who is *the propitiation for the ſins of the whole world.*

I ſhould now have proceeded to the fourth thing I propoſed in the handling of this argument, namely, to ſhew how contrary to this doctrine of the Chriſtian religion, concerning one only mediator and interceſſor in heaven for us, the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome is in this matter; namely, in their invocation of angels, and the bleſſed virgin, and the ſaints, and flying to their help, and making uſe of their mediation and interceſſion with God for ſinners; as likewiſe how contrary all this is to the doctrine and practice of the Chriſtian church for ſeveral of the firſt ages of it: and then I ſhould have anſwered their chief pretences and excuſes for theſe things;

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and shewed that this practice of theirs is not only needless, being no where commanded by God, but useless also and unprofitable; and not only so, but very dangerous and impious, being contrary to the Christian religion, and highly derogating from the virtue and merit of Christ's sacrifice, and from the honour of the only *mediator between God and men*. But of this another time.

SERMON LXXII.

Christ Jesus the only mediator between God and men.

1 TIM. ii. 5. 6.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all.

The third sermon on this text.

IN these words are four propositions; three expressed, and the fourth implied.

1. That *there is one God.*

2. That there is *one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus.*

3. That he *gave himself a ransom for all.*

4. That the mediation or intercession of Jesus Christ is founded in his redemption of mankind: that because he *gave himself a ransom for all* men; therefore he, and he only, is qualified to interceed for all men, in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered for the salvation of all mankind.

The *Second* of these I spake to the last time, and endeavoured to shew,

I. That God hath appointed but *one mediator*, or advocate, or intercessor in heaven for us, by whose mediation we are to offer up all our prayers and services to God.

II. That this doctrine of *one mediator* is most agreeable

able to one main end and design of the Christian religion, and of our Saviour's coming into the world; which was, to destroy idolatry.

III. That from the nature and reason of the thing, (*viz.* because intercession for sinners is founded in the merit of that sacrifice by which expiation of sin is made), there can be no other mediator of intercession, but he who hath made expiation for sin, by a sacrifice offered to God for that purpose. And this Jesus Christ only hath done. Thus far I have gone. I proceed now to

IV. The fourth thing which I proposed in the handling of this argument, namely, to shew how contrary to this doctrine of the Christian religion, concerning one only mediator and intercessor in heaven for us, the doctrine and the practice of the church of Rome is in this matter; namely, in their invocation of angels, and the blessed virgin, and the saints; and flying to their help, and making use of their mediation and intercession with God for sinners.

And that I may proceed more distinctly in this argument, I shall handle it under these particular heads.

1. I shall endeavour to shew, that the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome in this matter is contrary to the doctrine of the Christian religion, concerning *one* only *mediator* and intercessor in heaven for us.

2. That it is contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Christian church, for several of the first ages of it.

3. I shall endeavour to answer their chief pretences and excuses for this doctrine and practice.

4. To shew, that this doctrine and practice of theirs, is not only needless, being no where commanded by God, but useless also and unprofitable.

5. And not only so, but very dangerous and impious; because contrary to the Christian religion, and greatly derogating from the virtue and merit of Christ's sacrifice, and from the honour of the only *mediator between God and men.*

1. I shall endeavour to shew, that the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome in this matter is contrary to the doctrine of the Christian religion, concerning *one* only *mediator* and intercessor in heaven for us; namely, in their invocation of angels, and the blessed virgin,

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and the saints; and flying to their help, and making use of their mediation and intercession with God for sinners.

That Jesus Christ is our only mediator and intercessor with God in heaven, by whom we have access to God in any action of religious worship, and that all our prayers and services are to be offered up to God only by him, and in his name and mediation, and no other, I have plainly shewed from scripture; and proved it by an invincible argument, taken likewise from scripture; namely, because the efficacy and prevaleney of his mediation and intercession is founded in the virtue and merit of his sacrifice; and that he is therefore the only *mediator between God and men*, because he only *gave himself a ransom for all*; he is therefore our only *advocate with the Father*, because he only is *the propitiation for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world*.

I have shewed likewise, that the scripture excludes angels from being our mediators with God, from the main scope and design of the epistle to the Colossians; and much more are the saints departed excluded from this office, being inferior to the angels, not only in the dignity and excellency of their beings, but very probably in the degree of their knowledge.

In short, prayer is a proper act of religious worship, and therefore peculiar to God alone; and we are commanded to *worship the Lord our God, and to serve him only*: and no where in scripture are we directed to address our prayers, and supplications, and thanksgivings, to any but God alone, and only in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ. Our blessed Saviour himself hath taught us to put up all our prayers to God our heavenly Father, Luke xi. 2. *When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven*: which plainly shews to whom all our prayers are to be addressed; and [illegible]s we can call an angel, or the blessed virgin, or a saint, *our Father*, we can pray to none of them. And elsewhere he as plainly directs us, by whom we are to apply ourselves to God, and in whose name and mediation we are to put up all our requests to him, John xiv. 6. *I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me*: and then it follows, ℣ 13. 14. *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified*

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rified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. Nothing is clearer in the whole Bible, than *one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus*, and that he is our only advocate and intercessor with God in heaven for us.

2. I shall endeavour to shew, that the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome in this matter is contrary to that of the Christian church, for several of the first ages of it.

As for the ages of the Apostles, it hath been already proved out of their writings. That it was not practised in the three first ages, we have the acknowledgment of Cardinal Perron, and others of their learned writers; and they give a very remarkable reason for it, namely, because the worship and invocation of saints and angels, and addressing our prayers to God by them, might have seemed to have given countenance to the Heathen idolatry. From whence I cannot forbear, by the way, to make these two observations. 1. That the invocation of saints and angels, and the blessed virgin, and addressing ourselves to God by their mediation, was not in those primitive ages esteemed a duty of the Christian religion; because if it had, it could not have been omitted for fear of the scandal consequent upon it: and if it was not a duty then, by what authority or law can it be made so since? 2. That this practice is very liable to the suspicion of idolatry; and surely every Christian cannot but think it fit, that the church of Christ should, like a chaste spouse, not only be free from the crime, but from all suspicion of idolatry.

And for the next ages after the Apostles, nothing is plainer, than that both their doctrine and practice were contrary to the doctrine and practice of the present church of Rome in this matter. The most ancient fathers of the Christian church do constantly define prayer to be an address to God, and therefore it cannot be made to any but God only: and after the rise of Arianism, they argued for the divinity of Christ against the Arians, from our praying to him; which argument were of no force, if prayers might be made to any but God: and this was in the beginning of the fourth age.

And we no where find any mention of those distinctions,

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ons, of gods by nature, and gods by participation, (as Bellarmine calls the angels and saints); or of a supreme and inferior religious worship; or of a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of intercession; which are so commonly made use of by the church of Rome in this controversy.

And, which is as considerable as any of the rest, the ancient fathers were generally of opinion, that the saints were not admitted to the beatifick vision, till after the day of judgment; and this is acknowledged by the most learned of the church of Rome. But this very opinion takes away the foundation of praying to saints; because the church of Rome grounds it upon their reigning with Christ in heaven, and upon the light and knowledge which is communicated to them in the beatifick vision; and if so, then they who believed the saints not yet to be admitted to this vision, could have no reason or ground to pray to them.

And, lastly, the ancient church prayed for saints departed, and for the blessed virgin herself; and therefore could not pray to them as intercessors for them in heaven, for whom they themselves interceded upon earth. And therefore the church of Rome, in compliance with the change which they have made in their doctrine, have changed the missal in that point; and instead of praying for St. Leo, one of their Popes, as they were wont to do in their ancient missal, in this form, "Grant, O Lord, "that this oblation may be profitable to the soul of thy "servant Leo;" the collect is now changed in the present Roman missal into this form: "Grant, O Lord, "that by the intercession of blessed Leo, this offering "may be profitable to us." And, as the gloss upon the Canon law observes, this change was made in their missal upon very good reason; "because anciently they "prayed for Leo, but now they pray to him;" which is an ingenuous acknowledgment, that both the doctrine and practice of their church are plainly changed from what they anciently were in this matter.

What the doctrines and practices of their church, of Rome, are in this matter, all the world sees; and they themselves are so ashamed of them, that of late all their endeavours have been, to represent them otherwise than in

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in truth they are, and to obtrude upon us a new Popery, which they think themſelves better able to defend than the old; which yet they have not ſhewn that they are ſo well able to do: and therefore now, inſtead of defending the true doctrines and practices of their own church, they would fain mince and diſguiſe them, and change them into ſomething that comes nearer to the Proteſtant doctrine in thoſe points: as if they had no way to defend their own doctrines, but by ſeeming to deſert them, and by bringing them as near to ours as poſſibly they can.

But take them as they have mollified them and pared them, to render them more plauſible and tenible; that which ſtill remains of them, I mean the ſolemn invocation of ſaints and angels, as mediators and interceſſors with God in heaven for us, is plainly contrary both to the doctrine and practice of the primitive ages of Chriſtianity.

As for the age of the Apoſtles, I have already ſhewn it: and the matter is as clear for ſeveral of the next following ages; as I ſhall briefly ſhew from a few very plain teſtimonies.

In the age next to the Apoſtles, we have an epiſtle of one of the ſeven churches, (I mean the church of Smyrna); in which, in vindication of themſelves from that calumny which was raiſed againſt them by the Jews, among the Heathen, "that if they permitted the Chriſtians to have the body of the martyred Polycarp, "they would leave Chriſt to worſhip Polycarp;" I ſay, in vindication of themſelves from this calumny, they declare themſelves thus: "Not knowing (ſay they) "that we can neither leave Chriſt, who ſuffered for "the ſalvation of the world of thoſe that are ſaved, "nor worſhip any other; (or, as it is in the old Latin tranſlation, nor offer up the ſupplication of prayer "to any other perſon): for as for Jeſus Chriſt, we adore him, as being the Son of God; but as for the "martyrs, we love them, as the diſciples and imitators of the Lord." So that they plainly exclude the ſaints from any ſort of religious worſhip, of which prayer or invocation was always eſteemed a very conſiderable part.

Irenæus

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Irenæus likewiſe tells us, *l.* 2: that "the church doth "nothing (ſpeaking of the miracles which were wrought) "by the invocation of angels, nor by inchantment, "nor by any other wicked arts; but by prayers to the "Lord, who made all things, and by calling on the "name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." Here all invocation of angels, and, by the ſame or greater reaſon, of the ſaints, is excluded. And Clemens Alexandrinus delivers it as the doctrine of the church, that "ſince "there is but one good God, therefore both we and the "angels pray to him, both for the giving and the con-"tinuance of good things."

In the next age, Origen is ſo full and expreſs in this matter, that it is not poſſible for any Proteſtant to ſpeak more poſitively and clearly, *l.* 8. *cont. Celſum*, where he does on ſet purpoſe declare and vindicate the Chriſtian doctrine and practice in this matter: "We worſhip "(ſays he) the one only God, and his one only Son, "and Word, and Image, with our utmoſt ſupplications "and honours; bringing our prayers to the God of all "things, through his only begotten Son." And afterwards, "Away (ſays he) with Celſus's counſel, that "ſays, we muſt pray to dæmons [or angels]; for we "muſt pray only to God, who is above all: we muſt "pray to the only begotten and firſt born of every "creature, and we muſt beſeech him to offer up our "prayers which we make to him, to his God and our "God." And again, (ſpeaking of angels), "As for "the favour of others, (if that be to be regarded), we "know, that thouſands of thouſands ſtand before him, "and ten thouſand times ten thouſand miniſter unto "him; theſe are our brethren and friends, who, when "they ſee us imitating their piety towards God, work "together to the ſalvation of thoſe who call upon "God, and pray as they ought to do, that is, to God only." And *l.* 5. where Celſus urges him with this, that "the ſcriptures call angels gods," he tells him, that "the ſcriptures do not call the angels gods, "with any deſign to require us to worſhip and adore "them inſtead of God, who are miniſtring ſpirits, and "bring meſſages and bleſſings down to us from God: "for (ſays he) all ſupplications, and prayer, and inter-"ceſſion,

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" ceſſion, and giving of thanks, muſt be ſent up to " God, who is above all, by the High Prieſt, who is " above all angels, and is the living Word and God." And though angels be only here mentioned, yet, by the ſame reaſon, all other creatures are excluded from being the objects of our religious worſhip and invocation, or mediators of interceſſion with God for us; becauſe " all ſupplication, and prayer, and interceſſion, and " thankſgiving, muſt be ſent up to God by our High " Prieſt, who is the living Word and God. Let us " then alſo (as he goes on) make ſupplication to the " Word himſelf, and intereceſſion, and giving of thanks, " and prayer: but to invocate angels, is not reaſonable, " ſince we do not comprehend the knowledge of them, " which is above us; and if we could comprehend the " knowledge of them, which is wonderful and ſecret, " this very knowledge, which declares to us their na- " ture and office, would not allow us to preſume to " pray to any other, but to the God who is Lord over " all, and abundantly ſufficient for all, by our Saviour " the Son of God." Where he gives two plain reaſons, why we ought to pray only to God, and to offer up our prayers only by the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of God, and our Saviour: firſt, Becauſe " he only is " Lord over all;" and therefore the worſhip of prayer is to be given to him only: and then, ſecondly, Becauſe we have no need of any other patron and bene- factor, or of any other mediator and advocate; " he " is abundantly ſufficient for all, by our Saviour the " Son of God."

In the ſame age, Novatian, in his book concerning the Trinity, makes uſe of this argument to prove the divinity of Chriſt; becauſe he hears our prayers, when we call upon him. " If Chriſt (ſays he) be only a " man, how can he be preſent every where to thoſe " that call upon him; ſince this is not the nature of " man, but of God, to be able to be preſent every " where? If Chriſt be only a man, why do we in our " prayers call upon him as mediator, ſince prayer to a " man is deemed ineffectual to help or ſave us? If " Chriſt be only man, why do we put our hope in him, " ſince hope in man is accurſed in ſcripture?"

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In the fourth century, the Apoſtolical Conſtitutions, under the name of Clemens Romanus, (but undoubtedly written in that age), give us a pregnant negative teſtimony in this matter: for though a great many of the publick prayers are there ſet down at large, yet they are all directed to God alone, and not the leaſt intimation there of any prayer made to the angels or ſaints, or even to the virgin Mary; nor of their interceſſion or aid; which now make ſo great a part of the publick devotions of the church of Rome.

Athanaſius, in his fourth oration againſt the Arians, proves the unity of the Father and the Son, from 1 Theſſ. iii. 11. *Now God himſelf, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, direct our way unto you.* From whence he argues thus: "One would not pray to receive any thing from the "Father and the angels, or from any other creature; "nor would one ſay, God and the angels give thee "this; but one would pray to receive any thing from "the Father and the Son, becauſe of their unity and "uniform gift; for all things that are given by the Father, are given by the Son, and there is nothing "which the Father doth not work by the Son:" and then concludes, that "it doth not belong to any, but "to God alone, to bleſs, and grant deliverances." This I take to be a very remarkable teſtimony againſt the church of Rome, who in their publick offices join the bleſſed virgin with God, and our Saviour, in the ſame breath; and ſometimes put her before her Son, "Let Mary and her Son bleſs us," as it is in the office of the bleſſed virgin; in direct contradiction to what I juſt now cited out of Athanaſius: and nothing ſo common in their mouths, as *Jeſu Maria*, Jeſus and Mary; nothing more frequent in their moſt eminent writers, than to join them together in their doxologies and thankſgivings: "Glory be to God, and the bleſſed "virgin, and to Jeſus Chriſt," ſays Gregory de Valencia. And Bellarmine himſelf concludes his diſputations concerning the worſhip of ſaints, in theſe words, "Praiſe be to God, and to the bleſſed virgin mother "Mary; likewiſe to Jeſus Chriſt, the eternal Son of "the eternal Father, be praiſe and glory." And in the very Roman miſſal itſelf, they make confeſſion of their ſins

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ſins "to God Almighty, and the bleſſed virgin Mary, "to St. Michael the Archangel, and to all the ſaints." And in their abſolution, they join together "the paſ- "ſion of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the merits of the "bleſſed virgin, and of all the ſaints, for the remiſſion "of ſins." And is not this the very thing which Athanaſius doth ſeverely condemn?

I have mentioned before the council of Laodicea, which about the middle of this century condemns the worſhip of angels, and praying to them, as downright idolatry. And towards the end of this fourth age, and in the beginning of the fifth, when it is pretended that praying to ſaints did begin, (though it was rather by way of apoſtrophe, and rhetorical addreſs, than of formal invocation), there are expreſs teſtimonies againſt it of the moſt eminent fathers of that time. I will inſtance but in three, Epiphanius, St. Chryſoſtom, and St. Auguſtine.

Epiphanius, in his confutation of the hereſy of the Collyridians, (which he calls the hereſy of the women, becauſe they firſt began the worſhip of the virgin Mary), declares moſt expreſsly againſt the worſhip of any creature whatſoever: "For neither (ſays he) is Elias to "be worſhipped, though he is reckoned among the "living, [meaning that he was taken up into heaven, "body and ſoul], nor John, nor any other of the "ſaints." And as for the virgin Mary, he particularly adds, that "if God will not have us to worſhip the "angels, how much more would he not have us to "worſhip her that was born of Anna?" and concludes, "Let Mary be had in honour; but let the Lord "be worſhipped."

St. Chryſoſtom, in a long diſcourſe, perſuades men to addreſs their prayers immediately to God; and not as we addreſs ourſelves to great men by their officers and favourites; and tells us, that "there is no need "of ſuch interceſſors with God, who is not ſo ready "to grant our petitions when we intreat him by others, "as when we pray to him ourſelves."

Laſtly, St. Auguſtine, "becauſe the ſcripture pro- "nounces him accurſed, that putteth his truſt in man;" from thence he argues, that "therefore we ought not

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" to ask of any other, but of our Lord God, either " the grace to do well, or the reward of it." The contrary to which, I am sure, is done in several of the publick prayers used in the church of Rome. And *l.* 22. *de civ. Dei,* he expressly tells us, that " the " names of the martyrs were recited in their prayers at " the altar; but they were not invocated by the priest, " who did celebrate divine service." And in the third council of Carthage, which was in St. Augustine's time, it is injoined, (*can.* 33.), that " all prayers that were " made at the altar, should be directed to the Father." Which how it is observed in the church of Rome, we all know.

To conclude this matter, It cannot be made appear, that there were any prayers to saints in the publick offices of the church, till towards the end of the eighth century. For, in the year 754, the invocation of saints was condemned by a council of three hundred and thirty eight Bishops at Constantinople, as is acknowledged by the second council of Nice, which first established this superstition in the year 787; and this very council was condemned seven years after in a council at Francfort, and declared void, and to be no otherwise esteemed of than the council of Ariminum.

Thus you see, when this doctrine and practice, so contrary to the doctrine and practice of a great many of the first ages of the Christian church, was first established, namely, at the same time with the worship of images, and when the first foundation of transubstantiation was laid; which, as they began at the same time, so they are very fit to go together.

I should now have proceeded to the next thing which I proposed, namely, to answer the chief pretences which are made for this doctrine and practice. But of that in the following discourse.

SERMON

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SERMON LXXIII.

Chriſt Jeſus the only mediator between God and men.

1 TIM. ii. 5. 6.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus; who gave himſelf a ranſom for all.

The fourth ſermon on this text.

IN the two former diſcourſes upon this text, I have treated on the ſecond propoſition I laid down from the words, *viz.* That there is but *one mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus.* In treating of this propoſition I ſhewed,

I. That it is agreeable to ſcripture.

II. That it is agreeable to one great end and deſign of the Chriſtian religion, and of our Saviour's coming into the world; which was, to deſtroy idolatry out of it.

III. That, from the nature and reaſon of the thing, there can be but *one mediator* or interceſſor in heaven with God for ſinners; and that he can be no other than Jeſus Chriſt.

IV. I ſhewed how contrary to this doctrine the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome is, in their invocation of angels, and the bleſſed virgin, and the ſaints, and making uſe of their mediation and interceſſion with God for ſinners.

This I endeavoured to do, by ſhewing, 1. How contrary this is to the doctrine of the ſcriptures. 2. How contrary to the doctrine and practice of the church, for ſeveral of the firſt ages of it. And thus far I have gone.

3. I proceed now, in the third place, to anſwer the chief pretences and excuſes which are made by thoſe of the church of Rome for this doctrine and practice.

As, 1*ſt*, That they only ſay, that it is lawful to pray

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to angels and saints; but do not injoin and require it. To this I answer two things.

(1.) In saying that it is lawful to pray to saints and angels, if they went no farther, they say that which they can never make good; because prayer is an act of religious worship, and peculiar and proper to God only, and therefore cannot be given to any creature, angel, or saint. This I have proved from scripture, where our Saviour commands us, *when we pray, to say, Our Father which art in heaven*; that is, to direct and address our prayers to God only. And St. Paul likewise forbids *the worshipping angels*, by invocating of them, and making use of them as mediators between God and us, in his epistle to the Colossians; which Theodoret expressly interprets concerning the invocation of angels, and applying ourselves to them, as mediators and intercessors with God in heaven for us. And the council of Laodicea declares this practice to be idolatry. Besides that the ancient fathers of the Christian church, for above three hundred years, never spake of praying to any but God only; and do expressly condemn the invocation of angels; much more of the saints, who are inferior to them: and therefore they always define prayer to be an address to God, a conversing and discoursing with God; which would be a false definition of prayer, if it were lawful to pray to any but to God only. All which considered, one may justly wonder at the confidence of some men, who would have it taken for granted, without any proof, that the invocation of saints and angels is lawful.

(2.) If it were true, that it is lawful to pray to angels and saints, it is not true, that the church of Rome does only declare it to be lawful, but does not require and injoin it, as some of their late writers pretend.

With what face can this be said, when there are so many prayers to angels and saints, and especially to the blessed virgin, in the publick offices of their church, in which all are supposed to join, as much as in the prayers which are put up to God by the priest? It is true, indeed, the people understand neither; but they are present at both, and join in both alike; that is, as much as men can be said to join in that which they do not understand;

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as that church ſuppoſeth people may do, and receive great edification alſo, by joining with the prieſt in a ſervice which they do not underſtand. But how they can be edified by what they do not underſtand, I muſt confeſs myſelf as little able to underſtand, as they do their prayers. But whether they underſtand them or not, it is certain, that, if the people have any part in the publick prayers of the church, they are bound to pray to angels and ſaints.

And if the creed of Pope Pius IV. framed by virtue of an order of the council of Trent, be of any authority with them, one of the articles of it is, that "I do firmly hold, that the ſaints which reign together with "Chriſt, are to be worſhipped and invocated, and that "they do offer up prayers to God for us." And this creed all the governors of cathedrals and ſuperior churches, and all who hold any dignity, or benefice, with cure of ſouls from them, are bound ſolemnly to make profeſſion of, and ſwear to, and carefully to cauſe it to be held, and taught, and preached by all that are under their charge; ſo that they are to teach the people, "that the "ſaints which reign together with Chriſt, are to be worſhipped and prayed to." And therefore, unleſs people are not bound to do that which they are to be taught it is their duty to do, they are, by virtue of this article, required to worſhip and pray to ſaints. And if the publick office of their church be the publick worſhip, and Pope Pius's creed the publick faith of the Romiſh church, no man can be either of the faith or in the communion of that church, who does not only hold it lawful, but his duty, to worſhip the ſaints in heaven, and to pray to them; and accordingly does join in the worſhip of them, and prayers to them, as much as in any other part of divine ſervice.

2*dly*, Another pretence for this doctrine and practice, is, that the ſaints in heaven do pray for us; and what is this but to be mediators and interceſſors with God for us? and if ſo, why may we not pray to them, to interceed with God for us? To this I anſwer four things.

(1.) We do not deny, that the ſaints in heaven pray for us that are here upon earth; becauſe they may do ſo, for any thing we know: but that they do ſo, is more

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than can be proved, either by clear testimony of scripture, or by any convincing argument from reason; and therefore no doctrine or practice can be safely grounded upon it.

(2.) Though it were certain, that the saints in heaven do pray for us; yet they are not mediators and intercessors, properly so called: for all intercession, strictly and properly so called, is in virtue of a sacrifice offered by him that interceeds: and therefore he only by whom expiation of sin is made upon earth, can be properly an intercessor with God in heaven. But this no angel or saint hath done, nor can do.

And, as I have shewed in some of the former discourses, it is the plain scope of a great part of the epistle to the Hebrews to prove this very thing, that, under the gospel, *we have an high priest that lives for ever, and appears in the presence of God for us*, in the virtue of *that blood which he shed, and that sacrifice which he offered upon the cross for the expiation of sin*; and that *by this high priest only we have access, with freedom and confidence, to the throne of grace*; and by him do offer up all our prayers and thanksgivings, and all other acts of religious worship to God. And this the Apostle shews was typified, in an imperfect manner, by the Jewish High Priest under the law, who was but one, and none but he only could *enter into the holy of holies, with the blood of the sacrifices that were slain and burnt without, by which blood he made an atonement, and interceeded for the people*. And though every priest might pray for the people, and the people for one another, which is a kind of intercession; yet that peculiar kind of intercession, which was performed by the High Priest in the holy of holies, in virtue of the sacrifice that was slain without, could not be made but by the High Priest only. By all which was typified our High Priest under the gospel, who only *hath made expiation of sin, by the sacrifice of himself, and is entered into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us*, where *he lives for ever to make intercession for us*, in virtue of that blood which was shed for the expiation of sin, and which can only be presented to God by him that shed it. And this is properly intercession, like that of the High Priest under the law for the people of Israel:

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and this kind of interceſſion can be made by none in heaven for us, but only by *the high prieſt of our profeſſion*, Jeſus *the Son of God*; and by none elſe can we offer up our prayers and ſervices to God; and conſequently we cannot addreſs ourſelves to any other, angels or ſaints, as mediators with God for us.

(3.) Suppoſing it certain, that the ſaints do pray for us; yet we may not addreſs ſolemn prayer to them to pray for us, becauſe prayer and ſolemn invocation is a part of that religious worſhip which is peculiar to God.

(4.) Suppoſing it not only certain, that the ſaints in heaven do pray for us, but likewiſe that they might be proper mediators and interceſſors with God for us; yet we ought not to pray to them, becauſe they cannot hear us; as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew fully by and by.

3*dly*, Another of their pretences or excuſes for this practice, is, that praying to ſaints to pray for us, is no more than what we do to good men upon earth, when we deſire them to pray for us. So the late expounder of the Catholick faith, namely, the Biſhop of Meaux, tells us, that "they pray to the ſaints in heaven, in the "ſame order of brotherly ſociety with which we intreat "our brethren upon earth to pray for us."

But that this is not a true repreſentation either of their doctrine or practice in this matter, will appear by theſe following conſiderations.

(1.) That they pray to the angels and ſaints in heaven, with the ſame ſolemn circumſtances of religious worſhip that they pray to God himſelf; in the ſame place, and in the ſame humble poſture, and in the ſame religious offices and ſervices, in which they pray to God; which ſurely is never done by any to their brethren upon earth.

(2.) That in their prayers and thankſgivings they join the angels, and the bleſſed virgin, and the ſaints, together with God and Chriſt; as if (to uſe their own phraſe) it were "in the ſame order of brotherly ſocie-"ty," and as if they were all equally the objects of our invocation and praiſe; of which, in my laſt diſcourſe, I gave ſeveral plain inſtances: but this alſo is never done to our brethren upon earth.

(3.) That in the creed of Pope Pius IV. it is expreſs-

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ly said, that "the saints which reign together with Christ, "are to be worshipped and invocated;" but this surely they will not allow to be done to our brethren upon earth. And the council of Trent does expressly ground the worship and invocation of saints, upon their reigning with Christ in heaven; and therefore this worship and invocation of saints must necessarily be something more, than "according to the same order of brotherly society "with which we intreat our brethren upon earth to pray "for us:" otherwise the reason given by the council, of "their reigning with Christ in heaven," would be frivolous, if the same thing may be done to "our brethren "upon earth."

(4.) In the publick offices of their church, they do not only pray to the saints to pray for them, but they direct their prayers and thanksgivings immediately to them, for all those blessings and benefits which they ask of God, and thank him for. Of which innumerable examples might be given out of their publick offices; particularly in the office of the blessed virgin, they pray to the angels thus: "Deliver us, we beseech you, by "your command, from all our sins."

And the words of the decree of the council of Trent, *ad eorum orationes, opem, auxiliumque confugere*, "to fly to "their prayers, aid, and help," unless we will make them a mere tautology, must of necessity signify something more than begging of them to pray for us. And indeed those words of their *aid* and *help*, seem to be added on purpose to give countenance to those direct prayers which are made to the saints, for all spiritual and temporal blessings, and which still remain without any change in their publick offices: and unless we will understand them contrary to the plain and obvious sense of those prayers, they must signify something more than praying to the saints to pray for us.

It is true, indeed, that the catechism which was framed by order of the council of Trent, for the explaining of their doctrines, makes the difference between their prayers to God, and to the saints, to lie in this, that "we say to God, Have mercy on us, or, Hear our "prayers; but to the saints, Pray for us." But I have shewn before, that this is not the constant form of praying

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ing to saints, but that frequently they make direct addresses to them for their help and aid. And this the compilers of the catechism were sensible of; and therefore they add, "Although it be lawful in another manner to ask of the saints themselves, that they would "have mercy on us; because they are very merciful." And is not God so too? And then where is the difference between their prayers to God and to the saints? If it neither lie in the matter of them, nor in the form, nor in the reason of them; if we pray to them for the same thing, and in the same form, "Have mercy on us," and our prayers to them be grounded upon the same reason that our prayers to God are, namely, "because they "are merciful;" where then is the difference between them?

4*thly*, I will mention but one pretence more; which is, that by praying to the saints in heaven they do not make them gods; and therefore there can be no suspicion or danger of idolatry in the case.

To this I shall answer two things.

(1.) That praying to them in all places, and at all times, and for all sorts of blessings, does suppose them to have the incommunicable perfections of the divine nature imparted to them, or inherent in them, namely, his omnipotence, and omniscience, and immense presence. And to whatever being we ascribe these perfections, in so doing we make it God: for prayer to God is no otherwise an acknowledgment of his omnipotence, omniscience, and immense presence, than as we do in all places, and at all times, pray to him for all things. And so they do to the saints; and that not only with vocal, but with mental prayer, which the council of Trent allows; and, in so doing, necessarily supposeth them to know our hearts; directly contrary to the reason which Solomon gives why we should put up all our prayers and supplications to God, 1 Kings viii. 39. *For thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men.*

(2.) Bellarmine is so sensible of the dint of this argument, that he is forced to acknowledge "the saints "which reign with Christ in heaven to be gods by par-"ticipation, (that is, a sort of inferior gods, as the "Heathen

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" Heathen supposed their mediators to be); and that " therefore we may fly to their aid and help, as well as " to their intercession and prayers." And is this also to pray to the saints in heaven, " in the same order of " brotherly society with which we intreat our brethren " upon earth to pray for us?" This methinks is great familiarity, to treat gods by participation, just in the same manner as we do our brethren upon earth. Certainly, either Bellarmine hath raised the saints in heaven too high, when he makes them gods by participation; or the Bishop of Meaux hath sunk them too low, when he thinks they are to be treated and addressed to " in " the same rank of brotherly society with mortal men " here upon earth."

One cannot but think the decree of the council of Trent to be very obscure and ambiguous, when it can admit of two so very different explications. If the infallible judge of controversies can speak no plainer, I think we had even best stick to the Bible, and hear what God says in his word, and endeavour to understand it as well as we can.

4. I proceed now to the fourth thing which I proposed, namely, to shew that this practice of theirs, of addressing ourselves to angels and saints, and making use of their mediation, to offer up our prayers and thanksgivings to God, is not only needless, being no where commanded by God, but useless also and unprofitable.

They are so far from pretending, that it is commanded by God, that several of their later writers would fain make us believe that it is not injoined by their councils, but only declared to be lawful, or at most but recommended as profitable. Nor is there any example of praying to saints, either in the Old or New Testament: not in the Old, as they of the church of Rome confess, because the saints were not then admitted into heaven; nor in the New, for fear of scandalizing the Jews, and of making the Gentiles think they proposed new gods, and new mediators to them, instead of the old; which are the reasons given by their own writers.

And it is needless likewise, because the mediation of Jesus Christ alone is sufficient for us, and more than the intercession of millions of saints and angels. *He* alone

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is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him, as the Apostle to the Hebrews speaks. Hath not he made a clear and full promise to us, that *whatever we ask in his name, shall be granted us?* And have we any reason to doubt, either of his inclination and good-will, or of his power and interest to do us good? What need then is there to sue for the favour, or to take in the assistance of any other, even of those who are thought to be most powerful, and the chief ministers and favourites in that heavenly court? After such an assurance, that my business will be effectually done there by that great *advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;* why should I apply myself to St. Peter, though he be said to keep the keys of heaven; or to Michael the Archangel, though he be the chief of the ministring spirits; or to the blessed virgin herself, notwithstanding those glorious titles of the *Queen of Heaven*, and the *Mother of Mercy*, which they of the church of Rome are pleased to bestow upon her, and without her consent, and, as may reasonably be presumed, against her will?

I will put a case, which may help to render this matter a little more plain and sensible to us, so as every man may be able to judge of it. Suppose a King should constitute his son the great master of requests, with this express declaration and assurance, that all petitions that were addressed to him by his son, should be graciously received and answered; in this case, though every man might use his own discretion, at his own peril, and take what course he pleased; yet I should most certainly prefer all my petitions to the King, in the way which he had so plainly directed, and should trouble never a courtier of them all with my business, for fear the King should think, that I did either distrust his Royal word, or despise his son, by my soliciting the aid and help of every little courtier, after I had put my petition into the hands of this great master of requests.

And now I will not distrust any of your understandings so far as to make the application. I will only add, that it is an eternal rule of truth, and which never fails in any case, *Frustra fit per plura, quod fieri potest per pauciora;* "It is in vain to attempt that by more ways and "means, which may as well and as effectually be done "by

" by one;" because this would be perfect loss of time and pains. And therefore they who would send us so far about, as to trouble all the saints and angels in heaven with our petitions, when they cannot deny but that our great mediator is alone sufficient, do seem to me to send us upon a very sleeveless errand: so that if, with all their skill in fencing, they could defend this practice from being unlawful, yet this one thing is a sufficient objection in reason against it, that it is perfectly needless.

Or if we could imagine any need of this; all addresses to them must be vain and unprofitable, if they do not know our wants, and hear our prayers that are put up to them: which St. Augustine thought they do not know and hear; *Fatendum est*, (saith he, *l. de cura pro mortuis*), *nescire quidem mortuos, quid hic agatur:* "It must be "acknowledged, that the dead are ignorant of what is "done here." This was his opinion. But we are certain that they cannot know our wants, nor hear our prayers at all times and in all places; unless they can either be present every where, which no finite being can be; or else God be pleased in some supernatural way to communicate to them the knowledge of our wants, and of the prayers which we put up to them; which we can never know that he does, unless he hath communicated to us, that he is pleased to do so; of which the scripture no where gives us the least intimation.

But because they pretend, that the scripture gives us some hints of this, I shall briefly examine what they say about this matter.

1*st*, That the angels know our condition here below, because they are said to *rejoice at the conversion of a sinner*; and therefore the saints do likewise know our condition, because they *shall be like the angels*. But this is not said of them till after the resurrection, when we shall have no occasion to pray to them. Besides that it may well enough be supposed, that God may reveal both to the angels and saints in heaven the conversion of a sinner; because it may contribute to the increase of their joy and happiness: but will it hence follow, that God reveals to them all other circumstances of our condition, our dangers, and temptations, and troubles, our sins and our sufferings, the knowledge whereof would no ways contribute

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bute to the increaſe of their happineſs? and yet, in order to their interceſſion with God for us, their knowledge of theſe things would be moſt beneficial to us.

2*dly*, Becauſe the rich man was concerned in hell for the ſalvation of his relations on earth, they argue, that it is much more probable, that the ſaints in heaven are concerned for us, and are ready to pray for us; and therefore it is very credible, that, ſome way or other, they have the knowledge of our condition and wants, though we cannot certainly tell what that particular way is.

To which I anſwer,

(1.) That it is a known rule amongſt all divines, That no certain argument can be drawn from the circumſtances of a parable, but only from the main ſcope and intention of it: nor is it ſo likely, that the wicked in hell ſhould have any ſhare in that which St. Paul tells us is the great virtue of the ſaints in heaven, I mean charity; and if they have it not, then no argument can be drawn from it. Some of their commentators think, that this motion of the rich man to Abraham concerning his brethren did not proceed from charity to them, but to himſelf; leſt his torment and puniſhment ſhould be increaſed by their coming to hell, by the means of the ill example which he had given them when he was upon earth: and Cardinal Cajetan thinks, that he was concerned for his brethren out of pride and ambition, and becauſe it would be for the honour of his family, to have ſome of them in that glory, ſo far above any thing in this world, which he ſaw Abraham and Lazarus poſſeſſed of. This is a reaſon which I confeſs I ſhould not have thought on; and yet perhaps it might be likely enough to enter into the mind of a Cardinal. And I cannot but obſerve, by the way, that this petition or requeſt which the rich man in hell made to Abraham, is the only inſtance we meet with in ſcripture, of any thing like a prayer that was put up to any of the ſaints in heaven.

Well! but ſuppoſe that the rich man in hell had this charity for his brethren, and we will eaſily agree, that the ſaints in heaven have much more charity, not only for their kindred, but for all men here upon earth; let us now conſider the particular way and manner which the great divines of the church of Rome, I mean the ſchool-

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men, who cannot be content to be ignorant of any thing, do assign of the knowledge which the saints in heaven have of the condition and wants of men here below.

They tell us, that they know all our prayers and wants in the glass of the Deity or Trinity; which metaphor of the glass of the Deity or Trinity, if it have any meaning, it must be this, that the saints in heaven beholding the face of God, or the divine essence, in which the knowledge of all things is contained, they may in that glass see all things that God knows. But then they spoil all this fine speculation again, by telling us, that this glass does not necessarily represent to them all that knowledge which is in the divine mind; but that it is a kind of voluntary glass, in which the saints are only permitted to see so much as God pleaseth; but how much that is, they cannot tell us. Which amounts to no more than this, that the saints in heaven know as much of our condition here upon earth as God is pleased to reveal to them: and if this be all, it is as good a reason why we should pray to good men in the East or West Indies, to pray for us and help us; because they also know as much of our necessities and prayers as God thinks fit to reveal to them.

But if the saints must have a revelation from God of our prayers, before that they know that we pray to them; then the shortest and surest way both, is, to pray to God, and not to them; or however, as Bellarmine confesseth, it were very fit to pray to God, before every prayer we make to the saints, that he would be pleased to reveal that prayer to them, that, upon this signal and notice given them by God, they may betake themselves to pray to God for us. But unless it were very clear from scripture, that God had appointed this method, it is in reason such a way about, as no man would take that could help it. And it seems to me to as little purpose; for why should not a man think God as ready to grant him all his other requests, without the mediation and intercession of saints, as this one request of revealing our prayers and wants to them? And if this way be not thought so convenient, I know but one more; and that is, to pray to the saints to go to God, and beg of him, that he would be pleased to reveal to them our supplications and wants,

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wants, that they may know what to pray to him for in our behalf: which is just such a wise course, as if a man should write a letter to his friend that cannot read, and in a postscript desire him, that as soon as he hath received it, he would carry it to one that can read, and intreat him to read it to him. So that which way soever we put the case, what course soever we take in this matter, it will be so far from seeming reasonable, that we shall have much ado, and must handle the business very tenderly, to hinder it from appearing very ridiculous.

Thus I have examined their chief pretences from scripture, for the countenancing this doctrine and practice; and have shewn how little, or rather nothing at all is there to be found for it: and that alone is reason enough against it, though there were nothing in scripture against it, that there is nothing in scripture for it. But I have already produced clear proof out of the New Testament against it: and because they think the least shew and probability from scripture a good argument on their side, I will offer them a probable argument out of the Old Testament, upon which though I will lay no absolute stress, yet I believe it would puzzle them, upon their principles, to give a clear answer to it; and it is from 2 Kings ii. 9. where Elijah, just before he was taken up into heaven, says to Elisha, *Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee;* thereby intimating, as one would think, that then was the last opportunity of asking any thing of him: but if Elijah had understood the matter right, as the church of Rome does now, he should rather have directed him to have prayed to him when he was in heaven, where he would have a more powerful interest, and be in a better capacity to do him a kindness. For the reason the church of Rome gives why they did not pray to the saints under the Old Testament, namely, because they were not then admitted into heaven, will not hold in the case of Elijah, who was taken up into heaven body and soul; and consequently in as good circumstances to be prayed to as any of the saints and martyrs that have gone to heaven since.

5. I should now have proceeded, in the fifth and last place, to have shewn, that this practice is not only needless and useless, but very dangerous and impious; be-

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cause contrary to the Christian religion, and greatly derogating from the merit and virtue of Christ's sacrifice, and from the honour of the only *mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus*. And indeed how can we apply ourselves to any other mediators and intercessors with God in heaven for us, without a gross and apparent contempt of *the high priest of our profession, Jesus the Son of God*; as if we either distrusted his kindness and affection, or his power and interest in heaven to obtain at God's hand all those blessings which we stand in need of? The Apostle to the Hebrews tells us expressly, that *he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him*; that is, who address their prayers and supplications to God in his name and mediation. But if we will chuse other mediators for ourselves, of whom we are not sure that they can either hear or help us, we may fall short of that salvation which the Apostle tells us we are secure of by the mediation of Jesus Christ; for *he is able*, &c.

But this hath been shewn so abundantly in the former part of this discourse, and is so clearly consequent from the whole, that I shall here conclude my discourse upon the second proposition I laid down from the words of my text, *viz.* That there is but *one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*.

As to the *Third* proposition contained in the text, *viz.* That this *one mediator Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for all*, I have treated on that subject particularly on another occasion, [*Serm.* 47.].

And as to the *Fourth* and last proposition, *viz.* That the mediation or intercession of Jesus Christ is founded in his redemption of mankind; and because he *gave himself a ransom for all*, therefore he, and he only, is qualified to interceed for all men, in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered for the salvation of mankind; I judge nothing more needful to be added to what has fallen in concerning that subject, in my handling the second proposition, in this and the two former sermons.

SERMON

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SERMON LXXIV.

The general and effectual publication of the gospel by the Apostles.

Preached on Ascension-day.

MARK xvi. 19. 20.

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

IN these words you have these two great points of Christian doctrine.

1. Our Saviour's ascension into heaven, and exaltation at the right hand of God: *He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.*

2. The effect or consequence of his ascension and exaltation; which was, the general and effectual publication of the gospel: *They went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.* And both these are very proper for this day; but I shall at this time handle the latter point, namely, the effect or consequence of our Saviour's ascension into heaven, and exaltation at the right hand of God: *They went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.*

And these words contain two things in them.

1. The general publication of the gospel by the Apostles: *They went forth, and preached every where.*

2. The reason of the great efficacy and success of it; namely, the divine and miraculous power which accompanied the preaching of it: *The Lord wrought with them, and confirmed the word with signs following.*

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I. The general publication of the gospel by the Apostles: *They went forth, and preached every where.* And indeed the industry of the Apostles and the other disciples in publishing the gospel, was almost incredible. What pains did they take? what hazards did they run? what difficulties and discouragements did they contend withal in this work? and yet their success was greater than their industry, and beyond all human expectation; as will appear, if we consider these five things.

1. The vast spreading of the gospel in so short a space.

2. The wonderful power and efficacy of it upon the lives and manners of men.

3. The weakness and meanness of the instruments that were employed in this great work.

4. The powerful opposition that was raised against it.

5. The great discouragements to the embracing the profession of it. I shall speak briefly to each of these.

1. The vast spreading of the gospel in so short a space. This is represented Rev. xiv. 6. by *an angel flying through the midst of heaven, and preaching the everlasting gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.* No sooner was the doctrine of the Christian religion published, and made known to the world, but it was readily embraced by great numbers, almost in all places where it came. And indeed so it was foretold in the prophecies of the Old Testament, Gen. xlix. 10. that when *Shiloh* (that is, the Messias) *should come, to him should the gathering of the people be*; and Is. ii. 2. that *in the last days the mountain of the Lord's house should be established in the top of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills; and that all nations should flow unto it.* Is. lx. 8. the Prophet speaking of mens ready submission to the gospel, and the great number of those that should come in upon the preaching of it, they are said to *flee as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows.*

So quick and strange a progress did this new doctrine and religion make in the world, that in the space of about thirty years after our Saviour's death, it was not only diffused through the greatest part of the Roman empire, but had reached as far as Parthia and India. In which we see our Saviour's prediction fully verified, that before the destruction of Jerusalem the gospel should be preached

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preached in all the world, Matth. xxiv. 14. *This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.* But this is not all: men were not only brought into the profession of the gospel, but,

2. This doctrine had likewise a wonderful power and efficacy upon the lives and manners of men. The generality of those that entertained the gospel, *were obedient* to it *in word and deed*, as the Apostle tells us, concerning the Gentiles that were converted to Christianity, Rom. xv. 18. Upon the change of their religion, followed also the change of their manners, and of their former course of life. They that took upon them the profession of Christianity, *did thenceforth not walk as other Gentiles did, in the lusts of the flesh, and according to the* vitious *course of the world; but did put off, concerning their former conversation, the old man, which was corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and were renewed in the spirit of their mind, and did put on the new man, which after God was created in righteousness, and true holiness.* So strange an effect had the gospel upon the lives of the generality of the professors of it, that I remember Tertullian, in his apology to the Roman Emperor and senate, challengeth them to instance in any one that bore the title of *Christian*, that was condemned as a thief, or a murderer, or a sacrilegious person, or that was guilty of any of those gross enormities, for which so many Pagans were every day made examples of publick justice, and punished and executed among them.

And this certainly was a very admirable and happy effect which the gospel had upon men, to work so great and sudden a change in the lives of those who entertained this doctrine; to take them quite off from those vitious practices which they had been brought up in, and accustomed to; to change their spirits, and the temper of their minds; and of lewd and dishonest, to make them sober and just, and *holy in all manner of conversation;* of proud and fierce, contentious and passionate, malicious and revengeful, to make them humble and meek, kind and tender-hearted, peaceable and charitable: And that the primitive Christians were generally good men, and of virtuous lives, is credible, because their religion

ligion did teach, and oblige them to be such: which, though it be not effectual now, to make all the professors of it such as it requires they should be; yet it was a very forcible argument then, in the circumstances in which the primitive Christians were: for Christianity was a hated and persecuted profession: no man could then have any inducement to embrace it, unless he were resolved to practise it, and live according to the rules of it; for it offered men no rewards and advantages in this world; but, on the contrary, threatened men with the greatest temporal inconveniences and sufferings; and it promised no happiness to men in the other world upon any other terms, than of *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and of *living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*.

And besides this consideration, we have the best testimony in the world of their unblameable lives, *viz.* the testimony of their professed enemies, who did not persecute them for any personal crimes, which they charged particular persons withal, but only for their religion; acknowledging them otherwise to be very innocent and good people. Particularly Pliny, in his letter to Trajan the Emperor, (who had given him in charge, to make particular inquiry concerning the Christians), gives this honourable report of them, that "there was no "fault to be found in them, besides their obstinate re- "fusal to sacrifice to the gods; that, at their religious "meetings, it was an essential part of their worship, to "oblige themselves, by a solemn sacrament, against "murder, and theft, and adultery, and all manner of "wickedness and vice." No Christian historian could have given a better character of them than this Heathen writer does. But,

3. The success of the gospel will appear yet more strange, if we consider the weakness and meanness of the instruments that were employed in this great work. A company of plain and illiterate men, most of them destitute of the advantages of education, went forth upon this great design, weak and unarmed, unassisted by any worldly interest; having no secular force and power on their side, to give countenance and authority to them: and this not only at their first setting out, but they remained

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mained under these disadvantages for three ages together.

The first publishers of the Christian religion offered violence to no man; did not go about to compel any by force, to entertain the doctrine which they preached, and to list themselves of their number. They were not attended with legions of armed men, to dispose men for the reception of their doctrine, by plunder and free-quarter, by violence and tortures. This modern method of conversion was not then thought of. Nor did they go about to attempt and allure men to their way, by the promises of temporal rewards, and by the hopes of riches and honours. Nor did they use any artificial insinuations of wit and eloquence, to gain upon the minds of men, and steal their doctrines into them; but delivered themselves with the greatest plainness and simplicity; and, without any studied ornaments of speech, or fine arts of persuasion, declared plainly to them the doctrine and miracles, the life, and death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; promising life and immortality to them that did believe and obey his doctrine, and threatening eternal wo and misery in another world to the despisers of it.

And yet these contemptible instruments, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, did their work effectually, and, by the power of God going along with them, gained numbers every day to their religion, and in a short space drew the world after them.

Nor did they only win over the common people, but also several persons considerable for their dignity, and eminent for their learning, who afterwards became zealous asserters of Christianity, and were not ashamed to be instructed in the saving knowledge of the gospel by such mean and unlearned persons as the Apostles were; for they saw something in them more divine, and which carried with it a greater power and persuasion, than human learning and eloquence.

4. We will consider the mighty opposition that was raised against the gospel. At its first appearance it could not be otherwise, but that it must meet with a great deal of difficulty and opposition, from the lusts and vices of men, which it did so plainly and so severely declare against; and likewise from the prejudices of men that had been

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been brought up in a contrary religion; no prejudice being so strong as that which is founded in education, and, of all the prejudices of education, none so obstinate, and so hard to be removed, as those about religion, yea, though they be never so absurd and unreasonable: *Hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods?* Men are very hardly brought off from the religion which they have been brought up in, how little ground and reason soever there be for it: the being trained up in it, and having a reverence for it implanted in them in their tender years, supplies all other defects.

Had men been free and indifferent in religion, when Christianity first appeared in the world; and had they not had their minds prepossessed with other apprehensions of God and religion, and been inured to rites and superstitions of a quite different nature from the Christian religion; or had they at that time been weary of the superstitions of their idolatrous worship, and been inquiring after a better way of religion; then indeed the Christian religion had appeared with great advantage, and would in all probability have been entertained with a readiness of mind proportionable to the reasonableness of it. But this was not the case. When the doctrine of the gospel was first published in the world, the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles, were violently prejudiced against it, and fixed in their several religions.

The Jews indeed in former times had been very prone to relinquish the worship of the true God, and to fall into the Heathen idolatry. But after God had punished them severely for that sin, by a long captivity, they continued ever after very strict and firm to the worship of the true God; and never were they more tenacious of their religion and law, than at that very time when our Saviour appeared in the world: and though he was foretold in their law, and most particularly described in the authentick books of their religion, the prophets of the Old Testament; yet, by reason of certain groundless traditions, which they had received from the interpreters of their law, that their Messias was to be a great temporal prince, they conceived an invincible prejudice against our Saviour, upon account of the mean circumstances in which he appeared: and upon this prejudice they rejected

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jected him, and put him to death, and persecuted his followers. And though their religion was much nearer to the Christian than any of the Heathen indolatries; yet, upon this account of our Saviour's mean appearance, they were much more averse to the entertainment of it, than the grossest idolaters among the nations.

Not but that their prejudice also was very great; the common people being strongly addicted to the idolatry and superstitions of their several countries; and the wiser, and more learned, whom they called *philosophers*, were so puffed up with a conceit of their own knowledge and eloquence, that they despised the rudeness and simplicity of the Apostles, and looked upon their doctrine of a crucified Saviour as ridiculous, and the story of his resurrection from the dead as absurd and impossible. So St. Paul tells us, that *the cross of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.*

But, besides the opposition which the gospel met with al from the lusts and prejudices of men, the powers of the world did likewise strongly combine against it. Among the Jews, the chief priests and rulers did, with all their force and malice, endeavour to stifle it in the birth, and to suppress it in its first rise; and several of the Roman Emperors, who were then the great governors of the world, engaged all their authority and their whole strength for the extirpation of it; and raised such a storm of persecution against it, as swept away greater numbers of mankind, than any famine, or plague, or war, that ever was in the Roman empire: and yet this religion bore up against all this opposition, and made its way through all the resistance that the lusts and prejudices of men, armed with the power and authority of the whole world, could make against it. And this brings me to the

5. Fifth and last consideration I mentioned, the great discouragement that was given to the entrance of this religion.

There was nothing left to invite and engage men to it, but the consideration of another world; for all the evils of this world threatened every one that took the profession of Christianity upon him. Whoever was known to be a Christian, was liable to reproach and ruin,

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ruin, to cruel mockings and ſcourgings, to baniſhment, or impriſonment, and confiſcation of eſtate. But theſe were ſlight and tolerable evils, in compariſon of others that were commonly inflicted upon them. They were condemned to the mines, and to the lions, and all imaginable cruelties were exerciſed upon them; the moſt exquiſite torments that could be deviſed, and death in all its fearful ſhapes was preſented to them, to deter men from embracing this religion, and to tempt them to quit it: and yet they perſiſted in the profeſſion of their religion; and, for the ſake of it, did not only *take joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods*, but the moſt barbarous uſage of their perſons; and demeaned themſelves not only with patience and courage, but with exultation and triumph, under thoſe tortures which no man can hear or read of without horror. And they did not only bear up thus manfully for one brunt; but when theſe violent perſecutions were renewed and repeated upon them, Chriſtianity ſupported itſelf under all theſe daunting diſcouragements for almoſt three hundred years, and held out till the very malice of their perſecutors was out of breath, and their cruelty had tired itſelf.

Nay, it did not only ſupport itſelf under all theſe oppoſitions, but grew and proſpered; and the blood of martyrs became the ſeed of the church, and Chriſtians ſprang up faſter than any perſecution could mow them down: for men by degrees became curious to inquire into the cauſe of ſuch ſufferings, and the reaſon of ſo much conſtancy and patience under them; and, upon inquiry, were ſatisfied, and became Chriſtians themſelves; and many times their very peſecutors were ready to ſacrifice their lives the next day, for that very cauſe for which but the day before they had put others to death.

And it cannot here be reaſonably objected, that Chriſtians yielded up themſelves to all theſe ſufferings, upon the ſame account that ſome brave ſpirits among the Heathen laid down their lives for their country, namely, out of a deſire of fame, and to perpetuate their names in after ages: this, I ſay, cannot reaſonably be ſaid in this caſe; becauſe theſe ſufferers were not the great and ambitious ſpirits, the flower and ſelect part of mankind; but

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but the common people, and many of them of the tenderer sex and age, who have usually a greater sense of pain than of glory: and yet so were they animated by their religion, and transported beyond themselves, as not only to submit, but many times to offer themselves to those sufferings, by declaring themselves to be Christians, when no man accused them, and when they knew they should die for making that profession; so that it is harder to justify their forwardness to suffer, than the sincerity of their sufferings. Besides that nothing could be more foolish and unreasonable, than for men to hope to get a name by suffering in a crowd, and to be particularly remembered to posterity, when they died in such multitudes, that no man knew the names of the greatest part of the sufferers.

You see then how strongly the gospel prevailed, how soon this new religion over-ran the world, how suddenly it subdued the spirits and changed the manners of men; and by what mean and despicable instruments, to all human appearance, this great work was done; and how, in despite of all opposition and discouragements, it was carried on. Can any one of the false religions of the world pretend to have been propagated and established in such a manner, merely by their own force, and the evidence and power of truth, upon the minds of men; and to have borne up and sustained themselves so long under such fierce assaults, as Christianity hath done?

As for the religion of Mahomet, it is famously known to have been planted by force at first, and to have been maintained in the world by the same violent means. So that great impostor openly declares, that "he came not "to plant his religion by miracles, but by the sword."

And as for the idolatries of the Heathen, they came in upon the world by insensible degrees; and did not oppose the corruptions of men, but grew out of them; and being suited to the vitious temper and disposition of mankind, they easily gained upon their ignorance and superstition, by custom and example. They were just such a corruption of natural religion, in such times of darkness and ignorance, and by such insensible steps, as there have been since of the Christian religion in some parts of the world which we all know. But no sooner

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did the light of the gospel shine out upon the world, but the idolatry and superstition of the Heathen fell before it, like Dagon before the ark of God; and though it had the power of the world, and countenance of authority on its side, yet it was not able to maintain its ground: and no sooner was that prop taken away, which was the only support of it, but it presently sunk and vanished: it was not driven out of the world by violence and persecution; but, upon the breaking in of so great a light, it silently withdrew, as being ashamed of itself: and when afterwards the Emperor Julian endeavoured to retrieve it by his wit and authority, and used all imaginable arts and stratagems to suppress and extinguish Christianity, he was able to effect neither; for the Christian religion kept its ground, and Paganism, after it had made a little blaze, died with him.

Now to what cause shall we ascribe this wonderful success and prevalency of the gospel in the world? There can but these two be imagined; the excellency of the Christian religion, and the power and presence of the divine Spirit accompanying it.

1. The excellence of the Christian religion; which, both in respect of the goodness of its precepts, and the assurance of its rewards, hath plainly the advantage of any religion that ever yet appeared in the world. And this is a great advantage indeed. But by this alone it could never have been able to have broken through all that mighty opposition and resistance which was made against it: and therefore, that it might be able to encounter this with success,

2. God was pleased to accompany the first preaching of it with a mighty and sensible presence and power of his Spirit. And this brings me to the

II. Second part of the text, the reason of the wonderful efficacy and success which the Apostles had in the preaching of the gospel: *The Lord wrought with them, and confirmed the word with signs following.* Which words express to us that miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, which accompanied the first preaching of the gospel. By which I do not intend to exclude the inward operation of God's Holy Spirit upon the minds of men, secretly moving and inclining those to whom the gospel was preached,

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preached, to embrace and entertain it; which the scripture elsewhere speaks frequently of, and may possibly be intended in the first of these expressions, *the Lord working with them*; and the latter may only be meant of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, with regard to which God is said to *confirm the word with signs following*, or *accompanying it*. But I rather think they are both intended to express the same thing; and that the latter is only added by way of explication of the former, to shew more particularly how the Lord wrought with them, namely, by giving confirmation to their doctrine by those miraculous gifts and powers of the Spirit which they were endued withal: *the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following*; that is, with those miracles which accompanied the first preaching of the gospel. For these words do plainly refer to the promise of the Spirit at the 17th verse: *And these signs shall follow them that believe*; which is the reason why they are here called *signs following*; that is, miracles which accompanied the word that was preached.

And that this is the full meaning of this text, will appear by comparing it with one or two more: Rom. xv. 18. 19. where St. Paul speaking of *the things which Christ had wrought by him to make the Gentiles obedient* to the gospel, he says, they were done *through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God*; which is the same with that which is said here in the text, of *the Lord's working with* the Apostles, *and confirming the word with signs following*. So likewise Heb. ii. 3. 4. the Apostle there tells us, that *the gospel, which was first spoken by the Lord, was confirmed by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*. So that the great confirmation which is said here to be given to the gospel, was by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which were poured forth upon the Apostles and primitive Christians.

In speaking of which I shall briefly do these two things.

1. Give an account of the nature of these gifts, and of the use and end to which they served; and then shew, in the

2. Second place, how the gospel was confirmed by them.

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1. For the nature of these gifts, and the use and end to which they were designed.

They are those miraculous powers which, by the descent of the Holy Ghost, upon the day of Pentecost, the Apostles were endued withal, to qualify them to publish the gospel with more speed and success. Such was the gift of speaking divers languages, and the gift of interpreting things spoken in divers languages; (and these two gifts were not necessarily united in the same person, for the Apostle tells us that some had the one, and some the other); the gift of prophecy, and foretelling things to come, which was always a sign of a person divinely inspired; the miraculous powers of healing diseases, of raising the dead, and of casting out devils; a power of inflicting corporal diseases and punishments upon scandalous and obstinate Christians, who would not submit to the Apostles authority and government; which is in scripture called *a delivering up to Satan, for the destruction* (or tormenting) *of the body, that the soul may be saved;* nay, in some cases, this power extended to the inflicting of death itself, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.

Not that all these miraculous powers were given to every one of the Apostles, or that they could exercise them at all times. Some were bestowed upon one, and some upon another, according to God's good pleasure, and as was most expedient for the use and benefit of the church, and most subservient to those ends for which God gave them. Only we find that all the Apostles had the gift of tongues; and that the power of casting out devils in the name of Christ was common to every Christian, and continued in the church for a long time after the other gifts were ceased; as Tertullian, Arnobius, and Minucius Felix, do testify, even of their own times.

But, 2. I shall briefly shew how the gospel was confirmed by these miraculous gifts.

Now, besides the particular uses and ends of those miraculous gifts, (as the gift of tongues did evidently serve for the more speedy planting and propagating of the Christian religion in the world; and the power of inflicting corporal punishments in a miraculous manner upon scandalous and disobedient Christians, did maintain the power and authority of the Apostles, and was instead

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instead of an ordinary magistratical power, which Christians were destitute of whilst the Roman empire continued Heathen): I say, besides the particular ends and uses of all these miraculous gifts, they did all in general, as they were miracles, serve for the confirmation of the gospel.

The Apostles delivered the doctrine of Christ, and were witnesses of his resurrection from the dead, as the great miracle whereby his doctrine was confirmed. Now, there was all the reason in the world to believe them, to whom God was pleased to give such a testimony from heaven; for who could make any doubt of the truth of their testimony concerning the resurrection of Christ, who were enabled to raise others from the dead, and, by many other wonderful things which they did, gave such clear testimony that God was with them?

Never had any religion fewer worldly advantages to recommend it, and so little temporal countenance and assistance to carry it on: but what it wanted from men, it had from God; for he *gave witness to it with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.* God seems on purpose to have stripped it of all secular advantages, that the Christian religion might be perfectly free from all suspicion of worldly interest and design, and that it might not owe its establishment in the world to the wisdom and contrivance of men, but to the arm and power of God.

The inferences I shall at present make from this discourse shall be these:

1. To give us satisfaction of the truth and divinity of the doctrine of the Christian religion, which hath had so eminent a confirmation given to it from heaven, and did at its first setting out so strangely prevail in the world, against all human probability; *not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.*

No man can well suppose a religion in circumstances of greater disadvantage, and upon all human accounts more unlikely to sustain and bear up itself than the Christian religion was. The first appearance of it was so mean, and its beginnings so small, that no man but would have thought it would presently have come to nothing: and no other account can be given of the strange

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ſucceſs and prevalency of it, but that it *was of God*, and therefore it *could not be overthrown*.

2. This diſcourſe may likewiſe ſatisfy us of the reaſon why this miraculous power, which accompanied the goſpel at firſt, is now ceaſed; becauſe there is not the like reaſon and neceſſity for it, which there was at firſt.

It was highly neceſſary then, to introduce the Chriſtian religion into the world, and to be a ſenſible evidence to men of the divinity of that new doctrine which was preached to them. But now that the goſpel is generally entertained, there is not the ſame reaſon why this miraculous power ſhould ſtill be continued. *Acquiſito fine, ceſſant media ad finem;* "When the end is "once obtained, the means ceaſe;" and the wiſe God, who is never wanting in what is neceſſary, does not uſe to be laviſh in that which is ſuperfluous. Now that the Chriſtian religion hath got firm footing in the world, God leaves it to be propagated and advanced by its own rational force upon the minds of men: now that the prejudices of education in a contrary religion are removed, and the powers of the world are reconciled to Chriſtianity, there is no need of ſuch violent and extraordinary means for the continuance of it: now that it ſtands upon equal advantages with other religions, God hath left it to be carried on in more human and ordinary ways, and ſuch as are more level and accommodate to the nature of man.

That miracles are long ſince ceaſed, is acknowledged by the fathers who lived an age or two after the ceaſing of them; particularly by St. Chryſoſtom, who gives the ſame reaſon for it that I have juſt now aſſigned. But the church of Rome would ſtill bear us in hand, that this miraculous power does ſtill continue in their church, and, according to Bellarmine, muſt always continue; becauſe he makes it an inſeparable property and mark of the true church.

But we pretend to no ſuch power: nor have we any reaſon ſo to do; becauſe all the doctrines of our religion are the ancient doctrines of Chriſtianity, delivered by our Saviour, and by his Apoſtles publiſhed to the world; and theſe are ſufficiently confirmed already, by the miracles

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racles which our Saviour and his Apostles wrought in the primitive times of Christianity. But the church of Rome hath great occasion and need of new miracles, to confirm their new doctrines: and therefore, as they have reason, they usually apply them to the confirmation of their new doctrines; some to confirm purgatory, and to give countenance to indulgences; others to encourage the worship of the blessed virgin and the saints; others to confirm that which all the miracles in the world are not sufficient to confirm, I mean the doctrine of transubstantiation; which, because it overthrows the certainty of sense, is in the nature of it peculiarly incapable of being confirmed by a miracle.

3. and lastly, The consideration of what has been said, does justly upbraid us, that this religion, which was so powerful at first, and hath such characters of divinity upon it, coming down to us confirmed by so many miracles, should yet have so little effect upon most of us who call ourselves Christians.

We have all the advantages of the Christian religion, having been educated and brought up in it; and yet it hath less effect upon us, than it had upon those whose minds were prejudiced, and whose manners were depraved, by the principles of a false religion: for those who were reduced from Paganism to Christianity, did on the sudden become better men; and were more holy and virtuous in their lives, than the greatest part of us, who have been instructed and trained up all our lives in the doctrine of Christianity.

The true reason of which is, that many of us are Christians upon the same account that they were at first Heathens; because it was the religion of their country, and they were born and bred up in it. But Christianity was the religion of their choice; and there were no motives to persuade them to the profession of that religion, but what were as powerful to oblige them to the practice of it. Let us also be Christians, not only by custom, but by choice; and then we shall live according to our religion.

He that takes up a religion for any other reason than to obey and practise it, does not chuse a religion, but only counterfeits the choice of it. We have, beyond comparison,

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comparison, the best and most reasonable religion in the world; a religion that hath the greatest evidence of its truth, that contains the best precepts, and gives men the greatest assurance of a future happiness, and directs them to the surest way of attaining it. Now, the better our religion is, the worse are we if we be not made good by it. The philosophy of the Heathen made some virtuous; and there were many eminent saints under the imperfection of the Jewish institution. What degrees then of holiness and virtue may be expected from us, upon whom the glorious light of the gospel shineth so brightly!

I will conclude all with the words of the Apostle, Heb. ii. 1. 2. 3. 4. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

SERMON LXXV.

The nature, office, and employment of good angels.

Preached on the feast of St. Michael.

HEB. i. 14.

Are they not all ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

THis is spoken of good angels; whose existence, as well as that of evil spirits, the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament do every where take for granted, no less than they do the being of God, and the

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the immortality of the soul. And well they may, since they are all founded upon the general consent of all ages, derived down to us from the first spring and original of mankind; of which general consent and tradition, it is one of the hardest things in the world to assign any good reason, if the things themselves were not true. Therefore I shall not go about to force my way into this argument concerning the existence of spirits, and beings distinct from matter, by dint of dispute, (which perhaps would neither be so proper, nor so profitable for this assembly), but shall take the thing as I find it received by a general consent of mankind. And so the books of divine revelation do; nor was there reason to proceed in any other method, than to suppose these things, and take them for granted, as generally assented to by mankind, without either asserting them for new discoveries, or attempting to prove what was so universally believed. The scriptures indeed have more particularly declared the nature of these spirits, as also their order and employment; as in the words which I have read to you, where the office and employment of good angels is more particularly discovered: *Are they not all* (says the text) *ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

The author of this epistle to the Hebrews having had occasion, in comparing the two dispensations of the law and the gospel, to speak of the angels, by whose ministry the law was given, did not think fit to entertain those to whom he wrote, with any nice and curious speculations (for school-divinity was not then in fashion) about the nature and order of angels; but tells us what it concerns us more to know, namely, what their office and employment is in regard to us. Concerning their nature, he only tells us, that they are *spirits;* as to their office and employment, he says in general that they are *ministring spirits;* that is, that they stand before God to attend upon him, ready to receive his commands, and to execute his pleasure: more particularly, that they are upon occasion appointed and sent forth by God *to minister* on the behalf, and to do good offices *for them that shall be heirs of salvation.* Which last words are a description of pious and good men, such as had sincerely embraced

embraced the Christian religion, and were thereby become the children of God, and *heirs of* eternal *salvation*. So that these words are a brief summary of the doctrine of good angels, and of what the scripture has thought fit to reveal to us concerning them: which may be referred to these three heads.

1. Their nature: *Are they not spirits?*

2. Their general office and employment: *Are they not ministring spirits?*

3. Their special office and employment in regard to good men: They are *sent forth to minister for them* (that is, in their behalf, and for their benefit) *who shall be heirs of salvation.*

And this is as much as is necessary for us to know concerning them. And all this is very agreeable to the general apprehension of mankind; but the scripture hath very much cleared and confirmed to us that which was more obscure and less certain before. I shall briefly explain and illustrate these three heads, and then draw some useful inferences from the whole.

I. For their nature, they are *spirits*. This is universally agreed by all that acknowledge such an order of beings, that they are *spirits*; but whether they are pure spirits, divested of matter, and all kind of corporeal vehicle, (as the philosophers term it), hath been a great controversy, but I think of no great moment and consequence. Not only the ancient philosophers, but some of the ancient Christian fathers, did believe angels to be clothed with some kind of bodies, consisting of the purest and finest matter, which they call *æthereal*. And this opinion seems to be grounded upon a pious belief, that it is the peculiar excellency and prerogative of the divine nature, to be a pure and simple spirit, wholly separate from matter: but the more current opinion of the Christian church, especially of latter times, hath been, that angels are mere and pure spirits, without any thing that is material and corporeal belonging to them; but yet so, that they have a power to assume thin and airy bodies, and can, when they please, appear in human shape, as they are frequently in scripture said to have done. And this seems most agreeable to the scripture-account of them; though I think it is no necessary article of faith, either

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either to believe that they are clothed with some kind of bodies, or that they are wholly divested of matter.

But however this be, they are described in scripture to be endued with great excellencies and perfections. They are said to *excel in strength*, Psal. ciii. 20.: and in *knowledge* and *wisdom*; hence are those expressions of being *as an angel of God, to discern good and bad*, 2 Sam. xiv. 17.; *wise, according to the wisdom of an angel*, ỳ 20.: to be of great activity and swiftness in their motions; hence it is that they are represented in scripture as *full of wings*: and to excel in purity and holiness; hence is that title given them in scripture, of *the holy angels*. This is the sum of what the scripture hath in several places delivered to us concerning the nature and properties of good angels: and beyond this, all our knowledge of them is mere conjecture and uncertainty; and the nice speculations concerning them, idle and wanton curiosities. Indeed the scripture gives sufficient intimation of several ranks and orders among them, by calling Michael an *archangel*, and *chief prince*, and by distinguishing them by the names of *principalities, and powers, and thrones, and dominions*: but what the difference of these names imports, though some have attempted to explain, yet I do not find that they have discovered any thing to us besides their own ignorance and arrogance, in pretending to be *wise above what is written; intruding into those things which they have not seen, being vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds*; as the Apostle censures some in his time.

II. We have here their general office and employment; They are *ministring spirits*: they are (as I may say) domestick servants, and constant attendants upon that great and glorious King, *whose throne is in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all; they stand continually before him, to behold his face*, expecting his commands, and in a constant readiness to do his will. For though the omnipotence of God, and his perfect power of acting be such, that he can do all things immediately by himself, *whatever he pleaseth in heaven and in earth*; can govern the world, and steer the affairs of it, and turn them which way he thinks best, by the least nod and beck of his will, without any instruments or ministers of his

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his pleaſure; yet his wiſdom and goodneſs has thought fit to honour his creatures, eſpecially this higher and more perfect rank of beings, with his commands; and to make them, according to their ſeveral degrees and capacities, the ordinary miniſters of his affairs, in the rule and government of this inferior world: and this not for his own eaſe, (for to infinite power nothing can be difficult or troubleſome), but for their happineſs; and he therefore employs them in his work and ſervice, that they may be capable of his favour and rewards.

And that the angels of God are the great miniſters of his providence here in the world, hath not only been the conſtant tradition of all ages, but is very frequently and plainly aſſerted in ſcripture. In the Old Teſtament we often read, that God employed his angels to be the meſſengers of his will and pleaſure to men, and to carry good tidings and comfortable news to them upon ſeveral occaſions: As, to Abraham, to foretel the miraculous birth of his ſon Iſaac, and afterwards to reſcue him from being ſacrificed; to Jacob, when he was ſo afraid of his brother Eſau; to Manoah and his wife, to foretel the birth of Samſon, the great deliverer of Iſrael from the Philiſtines: and upon that great occaſion of bringing the people of Iſrael out of Egypt, and conducting them through the wilderneſs, he ſent a great and mighty angel (called *the angel of his preſence*) to go before them, and guide them in their way: and the Apoſtle tells us, that *the law was delivered to them upon mount Sinai by the diſpoſition of angels.*

On the other hand, God frequently made them the meſſengers of his wrath, and inſtruments of his vengeance. Thus he ſent them to foretel, and to execute that terrible deſtruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And he ſent a deſtroying angel to brandiſh his ſword in a viſible manner over Jeruſalem, and to ſmite them with the peſtilence, for David's ſin in numbering the people. And by the miniſtry of an angel, he ſlew in the camp of the Aſſyrians in one night, an hundred and eighty five thouſand. And Acts xii. 23. it is ſaid, that *the angel of the Lord ſmote Herod*, for receiving the blaſphemous acclamations of the people.

Nay, the angels ſhall be the inſtruments and executioners

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tioners of God's vengeance upon the wicked at the judgment of the great day. So the judge himself tells us, Matth. xiii. 49. 50. *So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing, and gnashing of teeth.*

And that particular angels do preside over empires and kingdoms, and sway the weighty affairs of them; and by a secret and invisible hand manage and bring about great changes and revolutions, both Jews and Christians have collected, with great probability and consent, from Daniel x.; where there is mention made of *the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstanding the angel that was sent to Daniel*, and of *Michael a chief prince assisting him*. And of this ministry of angels, in the government of kingdoms, Clemens Alexandrinus speaks, as of a thing out of all controversy. I proceed to the

III. Third thing which I principally intended, and seems to be chiefly designed in the text; and this is the special office and employment of good angels in regard to good men: and for this the Apostle expressly tells us, that they are *sent forth to minister for them* (that is, in their behalf, and for their benefit) *who shall be heirs of salvation*. In which words there are three things very considerable for our instruction and comfort.

1. Their particular designation and appointment for this employment, expressed in these words, *sent forth*, ἀπόστελλόμενοι, as if they were particularly commissioned and appointed by God for this very end. God himself doth superintend all affairs; and, by his particular designation and command, the angels do *fulfil his word*, and execute the pleasure of his good-will towards us. Hence it is so frequently said in scripture, that *God sent his angel* to such or such a person, for such or such purposes.

2. You have here the general end of their employment; for good men: they are sent forth on our behalf, and for our benefit; to take care of us, and protect us; to succour and comfort, to direct and assist, to rescue and deliver us.

3. Here is the more special end of their employment in regard to good men, intended in those words, *for them*

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who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation; hereby ſignifying, that the angels are employed about good men, with regard more particularly to their eternal happineſs, and for the conducting and furthering of the great affair of their everlaſting ſalvation. This certainly is our greateſt concernment; and therefore they have a more particular charge and care of us in regard to this.

It was a common opinion among the Heathen, and a conſtant and firmly believed tradition among the Jews, (the Sadducees only excepted, who did not believe there were angels or ſpirits), that every man, at leaſt every good man, had a guardian angel appointed him by God, to take a ſpecial care of him and his concernments, both ſpiritual and temporal; to guard him from dangers, to direct and proſper him in his way, and to comfort and deliver him in his affliction and diſtreſs. And therefore we find among the Jewiſh prayers, uſed by them at this day, a particular prayer, wherein they requeſt of God, to "command the angels who have the care of human "affairs, to help and aſſiſt, to preſerve and deliver "them." But eſpecially they believed good angels in their attendance upon good men, to be very active and diligent to incline them to good, and to encourage them therein, by holy emotions and ſuggeſtions, by ſecret comfort and aſſiſtances; and by oppoſing evil ſpirits, and defending us againſt their aſſaults, and by countermining their malicious deſigns and attempts upon us. And accordingly we find, that the beſt men among the Jews did ſtedfaſtly believe, if not the particular guardianſhip of angels, and that every good man had his particular angel aſſigned to him by God, to take the particular charge of him; yet the common miniſtry of good angels about good men, and their more eſpecial care of particular perſons, upon particular and great occaſions, to protect them from temporal evils, and to promote and proſper their temporal affairs and concernments.

Of this Abraham, *the father of the faithful*, and *the friend of God*, was moſt firmly perſuaded, at leaſt in matters of great moment and concernment to us; as appears by his diſcourſe with his ſteward, when he was ſending him to treat of a match for his ſon, Gen. xxiv. 40. *The Lord*, (ſays he), *before whom I walk, will ſend his angel*

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angel with thee, and prosper thy way. And David, the *man after God's own heart*, does more than once declare his confident belief of the watchful care and ministry of angels about good men: Psal. xxxiv. 7. *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* And Psal. xci. 11. 12. speaking of the good man, who putteth his trust and confidence in God, he tells him for his comfort and security, that the holy angels have a particular charge of him, to preserve him from all the mischiefs and dangers to which he is exposed: *He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

So that, according to the persuasion of those two excellent persons, and of greatest renown for piety in all the Old Testament, very much of the safety and the success of good men, even in their temporal concernments, is to be ascribed to the vigilant care and protection of good angels. And though this be seldom visible and sensible to us, yet we have great reason, upon so great testimonies, to assent to the truth of it. And there is no reason, I think, to doubt, but that God's care extends now to Christians, as well as it did to the Jews; and that the angels have as much kindness for us as they had for the Jews: and there is no reason to think, that the angels are now either dead or idle.

Our Saviour tells us, that they cannot die; and our reason tells us, that a pure spirit is an active principle: and the scripture represents angels as all flame and wings. Evil spirits are believed by Christians to be as active now to all purposes of harm and mischief as ever; and why should any man imagine, that good spirits are not as intent and busy to do good? The Apostle, I am sure, tells us in the text, that the angels in common, all of them, do employ their service about us, and wait to do good offices to us: *Are they not all* (says he) *ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

And our Saviour, Matth. xviii. 10. seems to approve and confirm the tradition of the Jews, concerning particular guardian angels belonging to every one that believed in him; that is, to every Christian: *Take heed* (says he)

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that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. And this seems likewise to have been a received opinion among the first Christians: for we find, Acts xii. 15. that when Peter was miraculously released out of prison by an angel, and came to the house where the Christians were assembled to pray for him, and one told them, that *Peter was at the door, they said, it was his angel,* thinking that he himself was fast in prison. For which saying there could be no reason, had there not been a current opinion among them of guardian angels.

And because the providence of God is more peculiarly concerned in conducting men to eternal happiness, it is very credible, that God should more especially ordain the ministry of angels about good men, for the furtherance of their salvation. And so the Apostle tells us in the text, *Are they not all ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?* Nay, our Saviour, in that remarkable place I mentioned before, Matth. xviii. 10. seems to intimate, that angels of a higher rank and quality are assigned guardians and guides to those that believed on him: *But I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven:* An allusion to the manner of earthly Kings; upon whom not all the servants, but the chief of the Nobility, do more immediately attend, and stand continually in their presence: for to *behold the face of the King,* and to *stand in his presence,* are phrases used in scripture to signify *immediate attendance upon his person.* So that by this manner of expression our Saviour doth most significantly intimate in what esteem good men are with God, whose care and protection he commits to the chief of the angels, to those who are nearest to him, and in highest favour and honour with him; as if he had said, Their angels are not of the ordinary rank, but such as are admitted to a more immediate attendance upon the great King and Governor of the world.

And no doubt it is for no mean end, that such high and glorious spirits are employed about us. It is chiefly for the furtherance of our salvation: for the purchasing whereof,

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whereof, the Son of God himself, *whom all the angels of heaven worship*, came down from heaven, and appeared and suffered in our nature, that we may one day *be made like to the angels*, and dwell where they are, and may *continually behold the face of our Father which is in heaven*, as they do. And, in order to this end, it is very probable, that good angels are ready to do good offices, just contrary to those of evil spirits; that is, to employ their best diligence and endeavour for the salvation of men; and that they are very sedulous and officious to restrain and pull them back from sin, and to excite and solicit them to that which is good; and, in a word, to do all they can to help forward the repentance and conversion of sinners. And this may reasonably be collected from that passage of our Saviour, Luke xv. 10.; where he tells us, that *there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.* And if they be so glad of the repentance of a sinner, we may easily imagine how forward they are to further and promote so good a work. And when sinners are brought to repentance, we have no reason to doubt, but that the angels are as ready to assist their progress in goodness.

It hath been a general, and, I think, not ill-grounded opinion, both of the Jews and Heathens, that good angels are more especially present with us, and observant of us, and assistant to us, in the performance of all acts of religion; that they are particularly present at our prayers; and therefore the Jews speak of a particular angel for this purpose, whom they call *the angel of prayer*; that they observe our vows, and our breach or performance of them. So Solomon seems to intimate, Eccles. v. 4. 6. *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin;* (that is, do not intangle thy life with a rash vow, which the frailty of human nature may make thee afterwards to break); *neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error;* that is, do not in the presence of the angel who attends upon thee, and observes thee, betray thine own error and rashness. This I take to be the meaning of this difficult passage, *Let not thy mouth*

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cauſe thy fleſh to ſin; neither ſay thou before the angel, that it was an error.

But the angels are yet more particularly preſent in the places and at the times of God's publick worſhip. The placing of the cherubims in the holy of holies ſeems to ſignify the preſence of the angels in our moſt religious addreſſes to God. And Plutarch ſays, that "the angels are the overſeers of divine ſervice." And therefore we ought to behave ourſelves with all modeſty, reverence, and decency in the worſhip of God, out of regard to the angels who are there preſent, and obſerve our carriage and behaviour. And to this the Apoſtle plainly hath reſpect in that place, which by interpreters hath been thought ſo difficult, 1 Cor. xi. 10. where he ſays, that *for this cauſe* (in the aſſembly of Chriſtians for the worſhip of God) *the woman ought to have a veil upon her head*, (in token of ſubjection to her huſband), *becauſe of the angels*; that is, to be decently and modeſtly attired in the church, becauſe of the preſence of the holy angels; before whom we ſhould compoſe ourſelves to the greateſt external gravity and reverence, which the angels behold and obſerve, but cannot penetrate into the inward devotion of our minds, which God only can do: and therefore with regard to him who ſees our hearts, we ſhould more particularly compoſe our minds to the greateſt ſincerity and ſerioufneſs in our devotion. Which I would to God we would all duly conſider all the while we are exercifed in the worſhip of God, who chiefly regards our hearts. But we ought likewiſe to be very careful of our external behaviour, with a particular regard to the angels, who are preſent there, to ſee and obſerve the outward decency and reverence of our carriage and deportment; of which we are very careful in the preſence even of an earthly prince, when he either ſpeaks to us, or we make any addreſs to him. And ſurely much more ought we to be ſo, when we are in the immediate preſence of God, and of his holy angels, every one of whom is a much greater prince, and of greater power, than any of the princes of this world. But how little is this conſidered, (I ſpeak to our ſhame), and by how few among us?

And as angels are helpful to good men, in working out

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out their salvation throughout the course of their lives; so at the hour of death they stand by them, to comfort them and assist them in that needful and dismal time, in that last and great conflict of frail mortality with death and the powers of darkness, to receive their expiring spirits into their charge, and to conduct them safely into the mansions of the blessed. And to this purpose also the Jews had a tradition, that the angels wait upon good men at their death, to convey their souls into paradise: which is very much countenanced by our Saviour in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 22. where it is said, that *when Lazarus died, he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.*

Nay, that the angels have some charge and care of the bodies of good men after death, may not improbably be gathered from that passage in St. Jude, ỳ 9. where *Michael the archangel* is said to have *contended with the devil, about the body of Moses.* What the ground of this controversy betwixt them was, may be most probably explained, by a passage, Deut. xxxiv. 6. where it is said, that God took particular care, probably by an angel, concerning the burying of Moses in a certain valley; and it is added, *But no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.* The devil, it seems, had a fair prospect of laying a foundation for idolatry, in the worship of Moses after his death, if he could have gotten the disposal of his body, to have buried it in some known and publick place. And no doubt it would have gratified him not a little, to have made him, who was so declared an enemy to idolatry all his life, an occasion of it after his death. But this God thought fit to prevent, in pity to the people of Israel, whom he saw upon all occasions so prone to idolatry; and for that reason committed it to the charge of Michael the archangel, to bury his body secretly: and this was the thing which *Michael the archangel contended with the devil* about.

But before I pass from this, I cannot but take notice of one memorable circumstance in this contest, mentioned likewise by St. Jude, in these words: *Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation.* His duty restrained him from it, and probably

probably his discretion too. As he durst not offend God, in doing a thing so much beneath the dignity and perfection of his nature, so he could not but think, that the devil would have been too hard for him at railing; a thing to which as the angels have no disposition, so I believe that they have no talent, no faculty at it. The cool consideration whereof should make all men, especially those who call themselves *divines*, and especially in controversies about religion, ashamed and afraid of this manner of disputing; since *Michael the archangel*, even *when he disputed with the devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation.*

But to proceed: This we are sure of, that the angels shall be the great ministers and instruments of the resurrection of our bodies, and the reunion of them to our souls. For so our blessed Saviour has told us, Matth. xxiv. 30. 31. that *when the Son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, he shall send his angels to gather the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Thus I have as briefly as I could, and so far as the scripture hath gone before us, to give us light in this matter, endeavoured to shew the several ways wherein good *angels* do *minister* in behalf of *them who shall be heirs of salvation.* All that now remains, is, to draw some inferences from this discourse; and so I shall conclude.

1. What hath been said upon this argument, and so abundantly proved from scripture, may serve to establish us in the belief of the truth, and to awaken us to a due consideration of it. That the angels are invisible to us, and that we are seldom sensible of their presence, and the good offices they do us, is no sufficient reason against the truth and reality of the thing, if by other arguments we are convinced of it. For by the same reason we may almost as well call in question the existence of God, and of our own souls; neither of which do fall under the notice of our senses; and yet by other arguments we are sufficiently convinced of them both. So in this case, the general consent and tradition of mankind, concerning the existence of angels, and their ministry about us, especially being confirmed to us by clear and express testimony of holy scripture, ought to be abundant evidence

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to us, when we consider that so general a consent must have a proportionable cause: which can be no other but a general tradition, grounded at first upon revelation, and derived down to all succeeding ages, from the first spring and original of mankind; and since confirmed by manifold revelations of God, both in the Old and New Testament.

But yet I am sensible, that all this is no conviction to the perverse and contentious. Men will not believe even the evidence of sense itself, when they are strongly prepossessed and prejudiced to the contrary: for do we not see great numbers of men, even so many as have the face to call themselves *the catholick church*, that can make a shift, when they have a mind, either to believe or disbelieve things contrary to the plainest evidence of their senses? All that I shall say farther about this matter, is, that this doctrine of angels is not a peculiar doctrine either of the Jewish or Christian religion, but the general doctrine of all religions that ever were; and therefore cannot be objected against by any but the Atheists.

And yet, after all, I know not whence it comes to pass, that this great truth, which is so comfortable to mankind, is so very little considered by us. Perhaps the corruption of so great a part of the Christian church, in the point of the worship of angels, may have run us so far into the other extreme, as scarcely to acknowledge any benefit we receive by them. But surely we may believe they do us good, without any obligation to pray to them; and may own them as the ministers of God's providence, without making them the objects of our worship.

I confess it seems to me a very odd thing, that the power of the devil, and his influence upon men, and the particular vigilancy and activity of evil spirits to tempt us to sin, should be so readily owned and so sensibly talked of among Christians; and yet the assistance of good angels should be so little taken notice of, and considered by us. The scripture speaks plainly of both, and the reasons for believing both are equal: for God forbid but that good angels should be as officious and forward to do us good, as the devil and his angels are malicious and busy to do us mischief. And indeed it would be very hard with mankind, if we had not as much reason to hope

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hope for the assistance and protection of good spirits, as we have cause to fear the malice and fury of the bad. Good angels are certainly as powerful, and have as strong a propension and inclination to do good, as the devil has to do harm; and the number of good angels is probably much greater than of evil spirits. The biggest numbers that are used in scripture, are applied to good angels: Dan. vii. 10. it is said of the angels about God's throne, that *thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;* and Rev. v. 11. *the number of them* is said to be *ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.* And the Apostle to the Hebrews, chap. xii. 22. calls them *an innumerable company of angels.*

What then should be the reason that men should be so apt to own the snares and temptations which the devil lays before us in all our ways, but take so little notice of the attendance and good offices done to us by good spirits? I can imagine but these two reasons, and I am sorry I can find no better; that we are more mindful of injuries than of benefits; and are glad to take in others for the excuse of our faults, but are loth any should come in for a share in the good that is done by us. And yet methinks it should be a very comfortable consideration to us against the enmity and cunning of the devil and his angels, that the holy angels of God are as intent and industrious to do us good, and to help forward our salvation, as evil spirits can be to work our ruin, and destroy us.

2. We should with great thankfulness acknowledge the great goodness of God to us, who takes such care of us, as to appoint his angels, and to give them particular commission and charge concerning us, to protect and assist us in all our ways, and especially to promote the great concernment of our eternal happiness; and that not only some particular and inferior spirits, but the chief ministers of this great King of the world, those that *stand in his presence, and behold his face,* and not a few of these, but the whole order of them, are employed about us. So the Apostle seems to say, by the question which he puts in the text, *Are they not all ministring spirits, sent forth to minister?* that is, all at one time or other.

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ther. And though they be principally appointed to miniſter to us in order to our ſalvation, yet we have no reaſon to doubt, but God employs them many times for our temporal ſafety, and makes uſe of them more eſpecially in thoſe great revolutions in which his cauſe and religion are more immediately concerned.

In ſuch a caſe, it is not at all incredible, that God ſhould give his angels a particular charge concerning thoſe that fight his battles, to pitch about their camps, and ſecretly to aſſiſt them againſt their enemies; and to ward off and put by many dangerous blows and thruſts which are made at them; and wonderfully to preſerve them, when the inſtruments of death fly about them, and do execution on every ſide of them. To what can we aſcribe ſuch and ſo many remarkable deliverances of a perſon upon whom ſo much depends, but either to the immediate hand of God, or to the miniſtry of angels? And where God is provided ſo abundantly with ſuch powerful beings and miniſters of his will, though they may be inviſible to us, yet there is great reaſon to believe, that he very ſeldom works without them.

And now, what an aſtoniſhing regard is this which the great God is pleaſed to have for the ſons of men, that he ſhould make the whole creation ſerviceable to us; not only the viſible creation, for the ſupport of our bodies, and the diverſion of our minds; but even the nobleſt of all his creatures, the great and glorious inhabitants of the inviſible world, mightily ſurpaſſing us mortal men, in the ſimplicity and purity of their nature, in the quickneſs and largeneſs of their underſtandings, and in their power and vigour of acting: I ſay, that God ſhould give theſe excellent and glorious beings the charge over us, and ſend them forth to miniſter to us, for the ſafeguard of our perſons, for the ſucceſs of our affairs, and for the ſecurity and furtherance of our eternal ſalvation! *Lord, what is man, that thou art* thus *mindful of him*, that when *thou madeſt him lower than the angels*, thou ſhouldſt yet make *the angels to miniſter unto him!*

3. If the angels have the particular charge of good men, we ſhould take heed how we deſpiſe, or be any way injurious to them: for how deſpicable ſoever they may appear to us, they are certainly very dear to God; ſince

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ſince he deems them ſo conſiderable, as to employ his chief miniſters about them, and to commit the charge of them to thoſe who, by their office, do more immediately attend upon himſelf. This is our Saviour's own argument, Matth. xviii. 10. *Take heed that ye deſpiſe not one of theſe little ones: for I ſay unto you, their angels do continually behold the face of your Father which is in heaven.* With how much contempt ſoever we may look upon a poor good man, he hath friends and patrons of a higher ſort, than any of the princes of this world.

4. If God appointed angels to be *miniſtring ſpirits* in our behalf, we may thence very reaſonably conclude, that God did not intend that we ſhould worſhip them. This ſeems to be a clear conſequence, if the reaſoning of the angel in the Revelation be good; where he forbids St. John to *worſhip him, becauſe he was his fellow-ſervant.* Yea, the conſequence ſeems to be yet ſtronger from the text, that if they be not only fellow-ſervants, but do in ſome ſort miniſter unto us, then we are not to worſhip them.

And yet this practice is openly avowed in the church of Rome, though it be reproved ſo very ſeverely by the Apoſtle as an apoſtaſy from Chriſtianity, Col. ii. 18. 19. *Let no man* (ſays he) *deceive you, in a voluntary humility, and worſhipping of angels; not holding the head;* as if it were a renouncing of Chriſt, out of a pretended humility, to make uſe of other mediators beſides him to the Father: and notwithſtanding alſo that the angel in the Revelation does ſo vehemently forbid it, ὅρα μή, *by no means, upon no terms,* to do it; and he forbids it for ſuch a reaſon as makes it for ever unlawful, namely, that we ought not to worſhip thoſe who ſerve and worſhip God together with us: *Do it not,* (ſays the angel): *I am thy fellow-ſervant: worſhip thou God.* In which words, he plainly directs us to the ſole and proper object of our worſhip.

Bellarmine, the great champion of the Popiſh cauſe, never uſed more groſs and apparent ſhuffling, than in anſwer to this text. He ſays firſt, "Why are we reproved for doing what St. John did?" To which the anſwer is very eaſy, Becauſe St. John himſelf was reproved by an angel for doing what he did. And now that his queſtion

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queſtion is anſwered, one might, methinks, aſk him a croſs queſtion or two. Why does the church of Rome preſume to do that which an angel does ſo expreſsly forbid to be done? or was it fit for St. John to worſhip one, who (according to Bellarmine) was ſo ignorant in the doctrine of the Catholick church, as to reprove him for doing his duty? as is evident from his ſecond crafty anſwer to this text, that "St. John did well to give due "worſhip to the angel:" and yet it is plain from this text, that the angel did not think the worſhip which St. John gave him to be his due.

It is very hard to imagine, but that a man of Bellarmine's underſtanding did intend to give up the cauſe in his anſwers to this text: but if he was in earneſt, then the matter is brought to this plain and ſhort iſſue, Whether it be fitter for us to believe a Cardinal of Rome, or an angel of God?

5. Laſtly, We ſhould imitate the holy angels, by endeavouring to ſerve God as they do, in miniſtring to the good of others. Whilſt we are in the body, in this ſtate of infirmity and imperfection, though we cannot ſerve God with the ſame activity and vigour that the bleſſed angels do; yet we may in the ſame ſincerity, and with the ſame true pleaſure and delight.

And we ſhould learn alſo of them, to condeſcend to the meaneſt ſervices for the good of others. If the angels, who are no ways allied to us, do ſo much excel us in the dignity and perfection of their nature, (for though David ſays, that *God made man a little lower than the angels;* his meaning is, that he made him next below the angels in the rank of beings, but yet very diſtant from them in perfection); I ſay, if thoſe glorious creatures, who are *the chief of the ways* and works *of God*, do not think much to humble themſelves to be miniſters on our behalf; ſhall we be ſo proud, as to think much to ſtoop to the loweſt offices to ſerve one another?

You ſee, my brethren, what is the conſtant work and employment of the bleſſed ſpirits above, to do good to men, eſpecially in order to their eternal happineſs; and this is the higheſt degree of charity, and charity is the higheſt perfection of men and angels: ſo that, to employ ourſelves, with all our minds, and with all our might,

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to help forward the salvation of others, is to be good angels (I had almost said to be a kind of gods) to men.

I hope that we all of us do hope one day to be like the angels, in the purity and perfection of their nature. So our Saviour has told us, that *at the resurrection we shall be like the angels.* Now, as they are the patterns of our hope and happiness, so let us make them the examples of our duty and obedience; according as our Saviour hath taught us to pray, that *God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven;* that is, that we may serve God, and do his will here on earth, (so far as the infirmity of our nature and of our present state will admit), with the same readiness and diligence, with the same chearfulness and zeal, that the holy and blessed angels do in heaven. And let us aspire continually in our minds after that blessed time, when we shall be free from sin and sorrow, from affliction and pain, from diseases and death; when we shall serve God without distraction, and do his will without weariness, and shall *be for ever with the Lord, amidst an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.*

Finally, Let us bless God, as for all the visible effects of his merciful providence towards us, so likewise for the invisible aids and protection of his holy angels; many times probably vouchsafed to us, when we are but little aware of it. But, above all, let us bless him for his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who *was made a little lower than the angels;* that is, a mortal man; *that by the suffering of death* for our sakes, *he might be clothed with glory and honour, according to the working of that mighty power which God wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.* To him, O Father, with thee, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, both now and for ever: *Amen.*

SERMON

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SERMON LXXVI.

The reputation of good men after death.

Preached on St. Luke's day.

PSAL. cxii. 6.

The latter part of the verse.

The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.

AS the desire and hope of immortality, which is implanted in human nature, is some evidence of the thing; so likewise that natural desire which is in men, to have a good name perpetuated, and to be remembered, and mentioned with honour when they are dead and gone, is a sign, that there is in human nature some presage of a life after death; in which they hope, among other rewards of well-doing, to meet with this also, to be well spoken of to posterity. And though probably we should not know the good that is said of us when we are dead; yet it is an encouragement to virtue, to be secured of it beforehand; and to find by experience, that they who have done their part well in this life, go off with applause; and that the memory of their good actions is preserved and transmitted to posterity.

And, among the many advantages of piety and virtue, this is not altogether inconsiderable, that it reflects an honour upon our memory after death; which is a thing much more valuable, than to have our bodies preserved from putrefaction: for that I think is the meaning of Solomon, when he prefers a good name before precious ointment, Eccl. vii. 1. *A good name is better than precious ointment.* This they used in embalming of dead bodies, to preserve them from noisomeness and corruption: but *a good name* preserves a man's memory, and makes it grateful to posterity; which is a far greater benefit than that of *a precious ointment*, which serves only to keep a dead body from stench and rottenness.

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I shall briefly explain the words; and then consider the matter contained in them. *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.* By the *righteous* is probably here meant the *good man* in general: for though justice and righteousness are in scripture frequently used for that particular virtue whereby a man is disposed to render to every man his own, which is known by the name of *justice*; yet it is less frequently, and perhaps in this place, used in a larger sense, so as to comprehend all piety and virtue. For so *the righteous man* is described at the beginning of this psalm, *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments*: and he is opposed to the *wicked man*, ℣ 10. *The wicked shall see it, and be grieved*; that is, he shall be troubled to see the prosperity of the righteous; the manifold blessings of his life, and the good name he shall leave behind him at his death; which is the meaning of his being *in everlasting remembrance*; that is, long after he is dead, perhaps for many ages, he shall be well spoken of, and his name mentioned with honour, and his good deeds recorded and remembered to all posterity.

So that the sense of the words amounts to this, That eminently good men do commonly leave a good name behind them, and transmit a grateful memory of themselves to after ages. I say, commonly; for so we are to understand these kind of sayings; not that they are strictly and universally true without exception, but usually and for the most part. It is possible, that a good man may soon be forgotten by the malice of men; or, through the partiality and iniquity of the age, may have his name blemished after death, and be misrepresented to posterity. But for the most part it is otherwise: and though the world be very wicked, yet it seldom deals so hardly and unjustly with men of eminent goodness and virtue, as to defraud them of their due praise and commendation after death. It very frequently happens otherwise to good men whilst they are alive: nay, they are then very seldom so justly treated, as to be generally esteemed and well spoken of, and to be allowed their due praise and reputation. But, after death, their good name is generally secured and vindicated, and posterity does them that right which perhaps the age wherein they lived

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lived denied to them. Therefore, in the profecution of this argument, I ſhall inquire into theſe two things.

1. Whence it comes to paſs that good men are very often defrauded of their juſt praiſe and reputation whilſt they are alive; and,

2. What ſecurity they have of a good name after death.

Firſt, Whence it comes to paſs that good men are ſo frequently defrauded of their juſt praiſe and reputation while they are alive. And to give ourſelves full ſatisfaction in this matter, two things are fit to be inquired into.

1. From what cauſe this proceeds.

2. For what reaſon the providence of God doth often permit it.

I. From what cauſe it proceeds, that good men have ſo often the hard fate to be ill ſpoken of, and to be ſeverely cenſured, and to have their worth much detracted from while they are alive.

And this proceeds partly from good men themſelves, and partly from others.

1. Good men themſelves are many times the cauſe of it. For the beſt men are imperfect; and preſent and viſible imperfections do very much leſſen and abate the reputation of a man's goodneſs. It cannot be otherwiſe, but that the luſtre of a great piety and virtue ſhould be ſomewhat obſcured by that mixture of human frailty which does neceſſarily attend this ſtate of imperfection. And though a man, by great care and conſideration, by great vigilancy and pains with himſelf, be arrived to that degree and pitch of goodneſs, as to have but a very few viſible failings, and thoſe ſmall in compariſon; yet when theſe come to be ſcanned and commented upon by envy or ill-will, they will be ſtrangely inflamed and magnified, and made much greater, and more than in truth they are. But there are few perſons in the world of that excellent goodneſs, but, beſides the common and more pardonable frailties of humanity, they do now and then diſcover ſomething which might perhaps juſtly deſerve a ſevere cenſure, if ſome amends were not made for it by many and great virtues.

Very good men are ſubject to conſiderable imprudences

dences and ſudden paſſions; and eſpecially to an affected ſeverity and moroſeneſs of carriage; which is very diſguſtful, and apt to beget diſlike. And they are the more incident to theſe kind of imperfections; becauſe, out of a juſt hatred of the vitious cuſtoms and practices of the world, and to keep out of the way of temptation, they think it ſafeſt to retire from the world as much as they can; being loth to venture themſelves more than needs in ſo infectious an air. By this means, their ſpirits are apt to be a little ſour, and they muſt neceſſarily be ignorant of many points of civility and good humour, which are great ornaments of virtue, though not of the eſſence of it.

Now, two or three faults in a good man, if an uncharitable man have but the handling and managing of them, may eaſily caſt a conſiderable blemiſh upon his reputation; becauſe the better the man is, ſo much the more conſpicuous are his faults; as ſpots are ſooneſt diſcovered, and moſt taken notice of, in a pure and white garment. Beſides that, in matters of cenſure, mankind do much incline to the harder ſide; and but very few perſons are ſo charitable and equal, as to conſtrue things to the beſt ſenſe, and to conſider a man all together, and fairly to ſet the good that is in him, againſt his faults and imperfections. But,

2. Though good men many times contribute too much to the leſſening of their own reputation with thoſe among whom they live; yet the principal cauſe of their ſuffering in this kind, is not from themſelves, but others; and that upon theſe three accounts.

1*ſt*, From the hatred and oppoſition of bad men to holineſs and virtue: and theſe are commonly the greateſt number, and make the lowdeſt cry. They are declared enemies to goodneſs; and then how can it be expected they ſhould have any great kindneſs for good men? They want virtue themſelves; and therefore they think themſelves upbraided by the good qualities of others.

This enmity of wicked men againſt the righteous, and the true reaſon of it, is very well expreſſed in the Wiſdom of Solomon, chap. ii. 12. 14. 15. 16. *Let us* (ſay they) *lie in wait for the righteous; becauſe he is not for our*

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our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressings of our youth. He was made to reprove our thoughts: therefore he is grievous unto us even to behold; for his life is not like other men; he is quite of another fashion. We are esteemed of him as reprobate silver: he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness. This is that which filleth the minds of wicked men with malice against the righteous; and malice will easily invent ways to blast any man's reputation. Good men do sometimes, as it is their duty, reprove those that are bad; or, if they do it not in word, yet they upbraid them in their actions, and contrary course of life: and both these are grievous and provoking to them. Not but that wicked men are many times in their consciences convinced of the real goodness of those whom they speak against; but they will not own it, lest in so doing they should condemn themselves.

2*dly*, Another cause of this, is the envy of those who perhaps have some degree of goodness themselves. For great virtue is apt to raise envy in those who fall short of it: and this makes those who are but imperfectly good, to detract from the eminent worth of others; because they are sensible they are outshined by them, and that it occasions a disadvantageous comparison, and makes their defects taken notice of.

They can endure a man that is moderately good, and keeps pace with his neighbours: but if he endeavour to outstrip them, they presently combine against him, and take all opportunities to undermine his reputation; and will be very glad, either to find a blot in his escutcheon, or to fix one there.

3*dly*, There is something in the very presence and nearness of goodness and virtue which is apt to lessen it.

In matters of sense, the nearer the object is, the bigger it appears; and the farther distant it is from us, the less it seems to be. But here it is quite otherwise: men are not so apt to value present worth, when yet they will reverence it mightily at a distance.

I know not whence it comes to pass, but so we certainly find it, that men are more sensible of the goodness and excellency of any thing, under the want of it, than

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than while they enjoy it; and do usually value it more when it is gone, than they did whilst it was present with them. Whilst we live with good men, and converse with them every day, we take but little notice of them; but no sooner are they departed, but we admire them, and every man's mouth is open to celebrate their good qualities. Perhaps familiarity, and acquaintance, and conversation, does insensibly beget something of contempt; but whatever the reason of it be, we find the thing most certainly true in experience.

II. Let us consider, in the next place, for what reasons the providence of God permits it thus to be. I shall mention but these two.

1. To keep good men humble, and, as the expression is in Job, *to hide pride from men.*

God's providence, in the disposal and ordering of things in this world, seems rather to consult our safety than our satisfaction, and the security of our virtue than the full reward of it. Now, if good men should always meet with that clear esteem and reputation which their goodness deserves, they would be in great danger of being puffed up with a proud conceit of themselves; and pride is enough to supplant the greatest virtue in the world. Such *a dead fly* as this were sufficient to *spoil a box of the most precious ointment.* For man is an ambitious creature, and vain above all things; so vain, as not only to be covetous of praise, but even patient of flattery; and the best of men lie too open on this blind side of human nature: and therefore God, who *knows our frame*, and how apt dust and ashes are to be proud, hath in his wise and merciful providence so disposed things, that good men are seldom exposed to the full force of so strong a temptation. And for this reason he lets loose envious and malicious tongues to detract from good men, for a check to the vanity of human nature, and to keep their virtue safe, under the protection of humility.

And this is the way likewise to secure the reputation which they have, and which otherwise would be in danger of being lost: for he that is once proud of the esteem he hath got, takes the readiest way to fall into contempt; and certainly it is better of the two, that our reputation

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reputation ſhould ſuffer a little by the malice of others, than be ruined by our own pride and vanity.

God does not envy good men the reputation of their goodneſs and virtue; but he knows the weakneſs of human nature, and *will not ſuffer it to be tempted above what it is able.* When good men are grown up to perfection, and able to bear it, as they will be when they come to heaven, their good name ſhall be fully vindicated, and they ſhall have praiſe, not only from men, but from angels, and from God himſelf.

2. This life is not the proper ſeaſon of reward, but of work and ſervice.

In this life God is pleaſed to give ſome preſent encouragement to piety and virtue, but reſerves the main of our recompence to be beſtowed upon us at the end of our work. When our *courſe is finiſhed*, then, and not before, we muſt expect our crown; when our accompts are caſt up, and ſtated, and it appears what improvement we have made of our talents, then will come the *Euge, bone ſerve; Well done, good and faithful ſervant.* In the mean time, good men muſt be content with ſuch a portion of eſteem as an envious and ill-natured world will afford them.

And thus I have done with the firſt thing I propoſed to inquire into, Whence it comes to paſs, that good men are frequently defrauded of their due praiſe and reputation while alive? I proceed to the

Second inquiry, namely, What ſecurity good men have of a good name after death?

And the true account of this is to be given, partly from the providence of God, and partly from the nature of the thing.

I. From the providence of God, which is concerned herein, upon a twofold account.

1. In reſpect of the equity of it.

2. In regard of the example of it.

1. In reſpect of the equity of it. God, who will not be behind-hand with any man, concerns himſelf, to ſecure to good men the proper reward of their piety and virtue. Now, praiſe is one of the moſt proper recompences of good and virtuous actions. This good men ſeldom meet with in this life, without a great deal of allay

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lay and abatement; and therefore the providence of God hath ſo ordered things, that it ſhould come in the propereſt ſeaſon, when our work is done, and when we are out of the danger of the temptation of it.

2. In regard of the example of it. It is a great argument to virtue, and encouragement to men to act their part well, to ſee good men applauded when they go off the ſtage. Every man that hath any ſpark of generoſity in him, is deſirous of fame; and though men care not how ſoon it comes, yet they will be glad to have it after death, rather than not at all. Piety and virtue would be but very melancholy and uncomfortable things, if they ſhould always be ſo unfortunate, as never to meet with due eſteem and approbation: but when men are aſſured, that they ſhall have this reward, one time or other, and obſerve it to be ſo in experience, this is a great ſpur and encouragement to do virtuouſly: and a great mind, that hath a juſt ſenſe of reputation and a good name, will be content to lay in for it beforehand, and patiently to wait the time which God knows fitteſt for the beſtowing of it.

II. The other part of the account of this truth is to be given from the nature of the thing; becauſe death removes and takes away the chief obſtacle of a good man's reputation. For then his defects are out of ſight, and men are contented that his imperfections ſhould be buried in his grave with him. Death hath put him out of the reach of malice and envy; his worth and excellency does now no longer ſtand in other mens light; his great virtues are at a diſtance, and not ſo apt to be brought into compariſon, to the prejudice and diſadvantage of the living; *Mortui non mordent*; "The example of the dead is "not ſo cutting a reproof to the vice of the living:" the good man is removed out of the way, and his example, how bright ſoever, is not ſo ſcorching and troubleſome at a diſtance; and therefore men are generally contented to give him his due character.

Beſides that there is a certain civility in human nature, which will not ſuffer men to wrong the dead, and to deny them the juſt commendation of their worth. Even the ſcribes and Phariſees, as bad a ſort of men as we can well imagine, though they were juſt like their fathers

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in perſecuting and ſlaying the Prophets, while they were alive; yet had they a mighty veneration for their piety and virtue, after they were dead, and thought no honour too great to be done to them. They would be at the charge of raiſing monuments to the memory of thoſe good men, whom their fathers had ſlain; and whom they would certainly have uſed in the very ſame manner, had they either lived in the days of thoſe Prophets, or thoſe Prophets had lived in their days, as our Saviour plainly told them.

All that now remains, is, to draw ſome inferences from what hath been ſaid by way of application; and they ſhall be theſe three:

1. To vindicate the honour and reſpect which the Chriſtian church, for many ages, hath paid to the memory of the firſt teachers and martyrs of our religion.

2. To encourage us to piety and goodneſs, from this conſideration, that *the righteous ſhall be in everlaſting remembrance.*

3. That when we pretend to honour the memory of good men, we would be careful to imitate their holineſs and virtue.

1. To vindicate the honour which the Chriſtian church hath, for many ages, done to the firſt teachers and martyrs of our religion; I mean more eſpecially to the holy Apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour; to whoſe honour the Chriſtian church hath thought fit to ſet apart ſolemn times, for the commemoration of their piety and ſuffering, and to ſtir up others to the imitation of them.

This certainly can with no good colour, either from ſcripture or reaſon, be pretended to be unlawful: and when David here ſays, *The righteous ſhall be in everlaſting remembrance*, he cannot certainly be thought to exclude the moſt ſolemn way of commemorating their piety and virtue.

I do not pretend this cuſtom can be derived from the very firſt ages of Chriſtianity; but ſurely it is ſufficient, for the lawfulneſs of it, that it is no where forbidden: nay, it is rather required here in the text; the beſt way to preſerve the memory of good men, being thus to commemorate them. And it may be of great uſe to us, if it be not our own fault; the ſetting before our eyes the holy

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holy lives of excellent men being in its own nature apt to excite us to the imitation of them.

Beſides that I could tell you, that though this cannot be proved ſo ancient, as ſome vainly pretend; yet it is of great antiquity in the church, and did begin in ſome of the beſt ages of Chriſtianity. *Memoriæ martyrum*, "the meetings of Chriſtians at the tombs of the martyrs," was practiſed long before the degeneracy of the Weſtern church; and the Chriſtians were wont at thoſe meetings ſolemnly to commemorate the faith and conſtancy of thoſe good men, and to encourage themſelves from their examples.

I know very well, that this did in time degenerate into groſs ſuperſtition, which afterward gave colour and occaſion to that groſs and idolatrous practice in the church of Rome, of worſhipping ſaints. But this abuſe is no ſufficient reaſon for us to give over the celebrating of the memory of ſuch holy men, as the Apoſtles and martyrs of Chriſt were; and propounding them to ourſelves for our patterns. We may ſtill lawfully give them their due honour; though the church of Rome hath ſo overdone it, as to rob God of his.

2. Let this conſideration, that *the righteous ſhall be in everlaſting remembrance*, be an encouragement to us to piety and goodneſs. This to a generous nature, that is ſenſible of honour and reputation, is no ſmall reward and encouragement. Before the happineſs of heaven was clearly revealed, and *life and immortality brought to light by the goſpel*, one of the greateſt motives to worthy and virtuous deeds, was the earneſt deſire which men had of leaving a good name behind them, and of perpetuating the fame and glory of their actions to after ages. Upon this ground chiefly, many of the braveſt ſpirits among the Heathen were animated to virtue, and, with the hazard of their lives, to do great and glorious exploits for their country.

And certainly it is an argument of a great mind, to be moved by this conſideration, and a ſign of a low and baſe ſpirit to neglect it. He that hath no regard to his fame, is loſt to all purpoſes of virtue and goodneſs: when a man is once come to this, not to care what others ſay of him, the next ſtep is, to have no care what himſelf

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ſelf does. *Quod conſcientia eſt apud Deum, id fama eſt apud homines:* "What conſcience is in reſpect of God, "that is fame in reſpect of men." Next to a good conſcience, a clear reputation ought to be to every man the deareſt thing in the world. Men have generally a great value for riches; and yet the ſcripture pronounceth him the happier man that leaves a good name, than him that leaves a great eſtate behind him, Prov. xxii. 1. *A good name is rather to be choſen than great riches.*

If then we have any regard to a good name, the beſt way to ſecure it to ourſelves, is by the holy and virtuous actions of a good life. Do well, and thou ſhalt be well ſpoken of; if not now, yet by thoſe who ſhall come after. The ſureſt way to *glory, and honour, and immortality,* is *by a patient continuance in well-doing.* God hath engaged his promiſe to us to this purpoſe, 1 Sam. ii. 30. *Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that deſpiſe me, ſhall be lightly eſteemed. The name of the wicked ſhall rot,* ſays Solomon, Prov. x. 7. But God doth uſually take a particular care to preſerve and vindicate their memory, who are careful to *keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them.*

3. and laſtly, Whenever we pretend to do honour to the memory of good men, let us charge ourſelves with a ſtrict imitation of their holineſs and virtue. The greateſt honour we can do to God, or good men, is to endeavour to be like them; to expreſs their virtues, and repreſent them to the world in our lives. Upon theſe days, we ſhould propound to ourſelves, as our patterns, all thoſe holy and excellent perſons who have gone before us; the Apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour, and all thoſe bleſſed ſaints and martyrs, who *were faithful to the death, and have received a crown of life and immortality.*

We ſhould repreſent to ourſelves the piety of their actions, and the patience and conſtancy of their ſufferings, that we may imitate their virtues, and *be followers of them, who through faith and patience have inherited the promiſes.* And *ſeeing we are compaſſed about with ſuch a cloud of witneſſes,* we ſhould *lay aſide every weight, and run with patience the race that is ſet before us.*

Let us imagine all thoſe great examples of piety and

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virtue ſtanding about us in a throng, and fixing their eyes upon us. How ought we to demean ourſelves in ſuch a preſence, and under the eye of ſuch witneſſes! And how ſhould we be aſhamed to do any thing that is unworthy of ſuch excellent patterns, and bluſh to look upon our own lives, when we remember theirs! Good God! at what a diſtance do the greateſt part of Chriſtians follow thoſe examples! and while we honour them with our lips, how unlike are we to them in our lives!

Why do we thus reproach ourſelves with theſe glorious patterns? Let us either reſolve to imitate their virtues, or to make no mention of their names; for while we celebrate the examples of ſaints and holy men, and yet contradict them in our lives, we either mock them, or upbraid ourſelves.

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, &c.

SERMON LXXVII.

The duty of imitating the primitive teachers and patterns of Chriſtianity.

Preached on All-Saints day, 1684.

HEB. xiii. 7.

The latter part of the verſe.

Whoſe faith follow, conſidering the end of their converſation.

The whole verſe runs thus:

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have ſpoken unto you the word of God: whoſe faith follow, conſidering the end of their converſation.

THE great ſcope and deſign of this epiſtle is, to perſuade the Jews who were newly converted to Chriſtianity, to continue ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of

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of it, notwithstanding all the sufferings and persecutions it was attended withal. And to encourage them hereto, among many other arguments which the Apostle makes use of, he doth several times in this epistle propound to them the examples and patterns of saints and holy men that were gone before them; especially those of their own nation, who, in their respective ages, had given remarkable testimony of their faith in God, and constant adherence to the truth: Chap. vi. 11. 12. *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* And chap. xi. he gives a catalogue of the eminent heroes and saints of the Old Testament, who by faith had done such wonders, and given such testimony of their patience and constancy, in doing and suffering the will of God; from whence he infers, chap. xii. 1. that we ought to take pattern and heart from such examples to persevere in our Christian course: *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of martyrs, or witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us;* especially since they had greater examples than these nearer to them, and more fresh in memory; the great example of our Lord, the founder of our religion; and of the first teachers of Christianity, the disciples and Apostles of our Lord and Saviour. The example of our Lord himself, the captain and rewarder of our faith, ℣ 2. of that 12th chapter: *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.* ℣ 3. *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.* This indeed is the great pattern of Christians, and, in regard of the great perfection of it, surpasseth all other patterns, and seems to make them useless; as having in it the perfection of the divinity, not in its full brightness, (which would be apt to dazzle rather than direct us), but allayed and shadowed with the infirmities of human nature; and, for that reason, more accommodate and familiar to us, than the divine perfections abstractedly considered.

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But yet, becauſe our bleſſed Saviour was God as well as man, and clear of all ſtain of ſin, (for though he was clothed with the infirmities, yet he was free from the corruption of human nature); therefore the examples of mere men, liable to ſin as we are, may in many reſpects be more ſuitable and accommodate to encourage us to the imitation of thoſe virtues which are attainable by us in this ſtate of imperfection: for which reaſon the Apoſtle hath thought fit likewiſe to propoſe to us the higheſt examples of that kind, the firſt teachers of our religion: for of theſe he ſeems to ſpeak here in the text, namely, thoſe Apoſtles, or apoſtolical men, by whom they had been inſtructed in the faith of Chriſt, but who were now departed this life; it being very probable, that the Apoſtle here ſpeaks of ſuch as were dead, when he ſays, *Remember them which have had the rule over you*, (or thoſe that have been your guides), *who have ſpoken to you the word of God: whoſe faith follow, conſidering the end of their converſation.*

I ſay, this is very probable, becauſe he minds them to *remember*; which ſuppoſeth them to be abſent: but eſpecially, becauſe he minds them to *conſider the end of their converſation*: by which, ſurely, he means the bleſſed ſtate of thoſe good men after death; which is elſewhere called *the end of our faith, even the ſalvation of our ſouls*, 1 Pet. i. 9. So likewiſe Rom. vi. 22. this is ſaid to be the end of a holy life: *Ye have your fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life.* And it very much favours this interpretation, that the Apoſtle afterwards ſpeaks of the living guides and governors of the church, ℣ 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves; for they watch for your ſouls.*

So that it is highly probable, that the Apoſtle here ſpeaks of ſuch guides and governors of the church as had once been over them, but were now departed this life; and therefore he might, with more freedom, and leſs envy, recommend their example to them, and bid them call to mind their faith, and exemplary converſation among them, and propoſe it for a pattern to themſelves, conſidering the happy end of it, *viz.* the bleſſed ſtate they were now in, and the glorious reward they were made partakers of in another life.

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In the words thus explained, you have,

First, A duty injoined; which is, to propose to ourselves, for our imitation, the examples of good men that have gone before us; especially the primitive patterns of Christianity, and the first teachers of our religion: *Remember them which have been your guides, and have spoken to you the word of God: whose faith follow.*

Secondly, The motive or encouragement to it, from the consideration of the reward of it: *Considering the end of their conversation.*

First, The duty injoined; which is, to propose to ourselves, for our imitation, the example of good men that have gone before us; especially the primitive patterns of Christianity, and first teachers of our religion: *Remember them that have had the rule over you, that have been your guides, and have spoken to you the word of God: whose faith follow.* In which words the Apostle bids them call to mind their first guides and instructors in Christianity, whom they had known, and heard, and conversed with in this world, but who were now *rested from their labours*, and were receiving the reward of them; to remember the doctrines they had heard from them, and the virtues they had seen in them; and to embrace the one, and imitate the other.

Thus we cannot remember the primitive teachers and patterns of Christianity, the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour; because we did not personally know them, and conversed with them, living at the distance of many ages from their time: but we may do that which is equivalent, and a kind of remembrance of them; we may commemorate their faith, and the virtue and holiness of their lives; and what we hear and read of them, we may propose for patterns to ourselves, and copy them out in our lives and actions: and this is our duty, and the same in substance with theirs, who had the happiness to know and converse with those excellent persons, to hear them preach, and to see the rules and precepts of that holy doctrine which they taught, exemplified in their lives.

In the handling of this argument, I shall do these three things.

1. Shew why, amongst all the examples of good men,

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we ſhould more eſpecially propoſe to our imitation the primitive teachers and patterns of our religion.

2. Wherein we ſhould imitate them. The Apoſtle expreſſeth it in one word, in their faith: *Whoſe faith follow.*

3. The encouragement to this, from the conſideration of the happy ſtate they are in, and the glorious reward they are made partakers of: *Conſidering the end of their converſation.*

I. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew why, among all the examples of good men, we ſhould more eſpecially propoſe to our imitation, the primitive teachers and patterns of our religion; I mean, the holy Apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour, *whoſe faith* we ſhould endeavour to *follow*, and to imitate the holineſs and virtue of their converſation: for theſe certainly come neareſt to that moſt perfect and excellent pattern of all goodneſs, our bleſſed Saviour, and are the faireſt tranſcripts of that unblemiſhed original. Hence it is that St. Paul ſo frequently exhorts Chriſtians to imitate his example, and the examples of the other Apoſtles; it being reaſonable to preſume, that they came neareſt to the pattern of our Lord: 1 Cor. xi. 1. *Be ye followers of me, even as I alſo am of Chriſt.* Phil. iii. 17. 20. *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk ſo, as ye have us for an enſample. For our converſation is in heaven.*

And this is reaſonable, that the firſt in every kind ſhould be the rule and pattern of the reſt, and of all that follow after; becauſe it is likely to be moſt perfect. In proceſs of time, the beſt inſtitutions are apt to decline, and, by inſenſible degrees, to ſwerve and depart from the perfection of their firſt ſtate; and therefore it is a good rule, to preſerve things from corruption and degeneracy, often to look back to the firſt inſtitution, and by that to correct thoſe imperfections and errors which will almoſt unavoidably creep in with time.

If we would preſerve that purity of faith and manners which our religion requires, we ſhould have frequent recourſe to the primitive teachers and patterns of Chriſtianity, and endeavour to bring our belief and lives to as near a conformity with theirs as is poſſible. Who ſo likely to deliver the faith and doctrine of Chriſt pure and

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and uncorrupted, as the primitive teachers of it, who received it from our Lord himself, and were, by an extraordinary assistance of the Holy Spirit, secured from error and mistake in the delivery of it? and who so likely to bring their lives and conversations to an exact conformity with this holy doctrine, as they who were so thoroughly instructed in it by the best master, and shewn the practice of it in the most perfect example of all holiness and virtue? Great reason there is, therefore, why all Christians should follow their faith, and make their conversation more especially the pattern of their lives.

The want of a due regard to these fountains of Christian doctrine, and the first and best patterns of Christian practice, hath been the great cause of that foul degeneracy of the Romish church, both in the doctrine and practice of Christianity. They do not follow the faith of the Apostles, the first fathers and teachers of Christianity, but of the fathers of the council of Lateran and Trent. Thus have they *forsaken the fountain of living waters*, the holy scriptures, *and have hewn to themselves broken cisterns, that will hold no water*, the doctrines and traditions of men. Nay, they have stopped up this *fountain of living waters* from the people, and forbid them to come to it; and forced them to drink of those impure and puddled streams, which they let out to them: and instead of the lives of the holy Apostles, and those eminent graces and virtues which shined forth in them, they represent to them the patterns of new saints: some of which neither they nor their fathers knew, and indeed never were in being; as St. Almanach, and St. Synoris, and several others: many of them so far from being saints, that they may be reckoned among the worst of men; for instance, our countryman Thomas a Becket, who, for pride and rebellion, may almost vie with Lucifer himself; and yet this ill man, and worst of subjects, was canonized to that height, as for two hundred years together, to ingross the worship of these Western parts of the world, and to impoverish the shrines of all other saints, even of the blessed virgin herself: others such idiots, or hot-headed fanaticks, that he that reads their lives would take them to be fools and madmen, rather than saints; as Francis, and Dominic,

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nis, and Ignatius Loyola, and several others of the same stamp: and many the very best of them so disguised by their legends, that, instead of the substantial virtues of a good life, their story is made up of false and fantastical miracles, and ridiculous freaks, and superstition.

All which considered, there is great reason why we should have recourse to the primitive patterns of faith and holiness, and be followers of them, who we are sure were followers of Christ. I proceed to the

II. Second thing I proposed, namely, Wherein we should imitate these patterns. And the Apostle expresseth it in one word; in their faith: *Whose faith follow.* And the word *faith* is frequently in the New Testament used so largely, as to comprehend the whole condition of the gospel; a firm belief of the doctrine of it, and the fruit and effect of this belief in a good conversation. And that *faith* here in the text takes in a holy life, is evident from what follows, *Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*: from whence it is evident, that the Apostle speaks of such a faith as shews forth itself in a good conversation.

So that we may very well suppose the Apostle here to recommend the primitive faith to our imitation in these four respects.

1. In regard of the sincerity and purity of it.
2. In regard of the firmness and stability of it.
3. Of their constancy and perseverance in it.
4. Of the efficacy and fruitfulness of it in a good conversation. All these may be collected from the expressions and circumstances of the text.

1. We are to imitate these primitive patterns in the sincerity and purity of their faith; I mean, that the faith which we profess be the sincere doctrine of Christianity, and the pure word of God, free from all mixture of human additions and inventions; and not made up, as the faith of the Pharisees was among the Jews, and theirs of the church of Rome is at this day, of the word of God, and the doctrines and traditions of men; not like the creed of Pope Pius IV. (which is now the standard of the Roman faith), consisting of the twelve old articles of the Christian faith, delivered to us by Christ

Christ and his Apostles, and as many new ones, coined and stamped by their later councils. This is not to follow the faith of the Apostles, and first patterns of Christianity, *the faith once delivered to the saints*, as St. Jude calls it. This is to have our faith stand upon the authority of men, and not on the word of God: whereas we are to follow the faith of the first guides of the Christian church, *who spake unto them the word of God*, as the Apostle expressly chargeth here in the text.

2. We are to imitate them in the stability and firmness of our faith, and not suffer ourselves to be *shaken*, and removed from it, *by every wind of* new *doctrine*; the faith of Christ being unchangeable as Christ himself. And that by following the faith of the primitive guides and teachers of Christianity, the Apostle here means, that we should be *stedfast and unmoveable* in it, is plain from what follows immediately after the text, *Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: for it is a good thing, that the heart be established with grace*; that is, in the doctrine of the gospel, which is frequently called *the grace of God.*

3. We are to imitate them in the constancy and perseverance of their faith; and that notwithstanding all the discountenance and opposition, the persecution and suffering which attend the profession of this faith; which the Apostle sufficiently intimates in this epistle, to have been the condition of those Christians to whom he wrote; and therefore he proposeth so many examples to them, of constant and patient suffering for God and his truth: and it is probable enough, that the Apostle here recommends the example of those who were the primitive martyrs, as well as teachers of Christianity. He had before proposed to them the living examples of those who were under actual persecution and sufferings for the gospel, ℣ 3. *Remember them that are in bonds, and them that suffer adversity*; and here, in the 7th verse, he seems to propose the pattern of those who had laid down their lives and died for the faith, *Remember those who have been your guides, and have spoken to you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation,*

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versation, τὴν ἔκβασιν τῆς ἀναστροφῆς, which may be rendered, *the last act of their lives*, the manner of their going out of the world, perhaps by martyrdom; as if he had said, Imitate them in their constancy and perseverance in the faith, even to the last, in laying down their lives for it. And thus we should be ready to do, if God calls us to it. However, it is certain the Apostle meant their constancy and perseverance in the faith to the last, and their dying in, if not for the faith of Christ. And this is necessary if we expect *the crown of life*, and hope for the same happy end, which they had; for none but they *that continue to the end, shall be saved.*

4. We should imitate them in the efficacy and fruitfulness of their faith, in the practice and virtues of a good life: *Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*; that is, their perseverance in a holy course to the end. And these must never be separated, a sound faith, and a good life. Without this, *our faith is* barren and *dead*, as St. James tells us, chap. ii. 17. Our knowledge and belief of the Christian doctrine must manifest itself in a good conversation. *Who is a wise man*, (says the same St. James, chap. iii. 13); *who is a wise man and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works. This is a faithful saying*, (saith St. Paul to Titus, chap. iii. 8.), *and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, be careful to maintain good works.*

And herein the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour were eminent examples. They lived as they taught, and practised the doctrine which they preached. So St. Paul strictly chargeth Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 12. *Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* And our Saviour tells us, that hereby chiefly false prophets and teachers might be known from the true Apostles of Christ, Matth. vii. 20. *By their fruits ye shall know them.* And indeed we do not follow the faith of those excellent persons, if we do not *abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which by Jesus Christ are to the praise and glory of God.* I come now to the

III. Third and last thing I proposed, *viz.* The encouragement to this, from the consideration of the happy

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py state of those persons who are proposed to us for patterns, and the glorious reward which they are made partakers of in another world: *Considering the end of their conversation, την ἔκβασιν, their egress* or *departure* out of this life, into a blessed and glorious state, where they have received the crown and reward of their faith and patience, and pious conversation in this world; or else, which comes much to one, *considering the conclusion of their lives*, with what patience and comfort they left the world, and with what joyful assurance of the happy condition they were going to, and were to continue in for ever.

And this is a great encouragement to constancy and perseverance in faith and holiness, to see with what chearfulness and comfort good men die, and with what a firm and steddy persuasion of the happiness they are entering upon. For who would not be glad to leave the world, in that calmness and serenity of mind, and comfortable assurance of a blessed eternity? Bad men wish this, and are ready to say with Balaam, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* But if we would have the comfort of such a death, we must live such lives, and imitate the faith and good conversation of those whom we desire to resemble in the manner of their death, and to go into the same happy state that they are in after death. If we do not make their lives our pattern, we must not expect to be conformable to them in the happy manner of their death. When we hear of the death of an eminent good man, we do not doubt but he is happy; and are confident, that he will meet with the reward of his piety and goodness in another world. If we believe this of him, let us endeavour to be like him, that we may attain the same happiness which we believe him to be possessed of; and, as the Apostle exhorts, chap. vi. 12. *Let us not be slothful; but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* Let us *shew the same diligence* that they did, that we may have the same *full assurance of hope unto the end* which they had.

The inference from this discourse which I have made upon this argument, is, to shew what use we ought to make of these excellent examples which are set before us,

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of the first founders and teachers of our religion, and what is the proper honour and respect which we ought to pay to their memory. Not invocation and adoration; but a zealous imitation of their faith and good conversation. The greatest honour we can do them, the most acceptable to God, the most grateful to them, and the most beneficial to ourselves, is, to endeavour to be like them: not to make any images and likeness of them, to fall down before them, and worship them; but to form the image of their faith and virtues upon our hearts and lives: not to pray to them; but to praise God for such bright and glorious examples, and to endeavour with all our might to imitate their faith, and patience, and piety, and humility, and meekness, and charity, and all those other virtues which were so resplendent in them. And this is to *remember* the founders of our religion as we ought, to *follow their faith*, and to *consider the end of their conversation*.

Had the Christian religion required or intended any such thing, as of latter times hath been practised in the world, it had been as easy for the Apostle to have said, *Remember them that have been your guides, and have spoken to you the word of God*, to erect images to them, and to worship them with due veneration, and to pray to them, and make use of their intercession. But no such thing is said, or the least intimation given of it, either in this text, or any other in the whole Bible; but very much to the contrary.

Their example indeed is frequently recommended to us, for our imitation and encouragement: and for this reason, the providence of God hath taken particular care, that the memory of the Apostles, and so many primitive Christians and martyrs, should be transmitted to posterity; that Christians in all succeeding ages might propound these patterns to themselves, and have perpetually before their eyes the piety and virtue of their lives, and their patient and constant sufferings for the truth; that when God shall please to call us to the like trial, we may not *be wearied and faint in our minds*; but being *compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses*, having so many examples in our eye of those *who through faith and patience inherit the promises*, and do now as it were look down

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down from their happy state upon us here below, who are combating with manifold temptations, to see how we behave and acquit ourselves in our Christian course, we may take encouragement to ourselves, from such examples and such spectators, to *run with patience the race which is set before us.*

I know indeed, that other use than this hath been, and is at this day made of the memory of the saints and martyrs of former ages, very dishonourable to God, and very grievous to them, if they be sensible of what is done here below; I mean, to worship them, and to pray to them, and (to the great disparagement of the powerful intercession of our great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God) to make them the mediators and intercessors in heaven with God for us. Of this the scripture hath no where given us the least intimation; but hath expressly commanded the contrary, to *worship the Lord our God, and him only to serve*; and to pray to him alone, in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the only *mediator between God and men.* Nor are there any footsteps of any such practice in the primitive church, for the first three hundred years; as is acknowledged by our most learned adversaries of the church of Rome.

The scripture no where propounds the saints to us for objects of our worship, but for the patterns of our lives. This is the greatest respect and veneration that we can or ought to pay to them; and whatever is beyond this, is *a voluntary humility*, injurious to God and our blessed Saviour; and most certainly displeasing to those whom we pretend to honour, if they know how men play the fool about them here below.

Let us then endeavour to be like them, in the holy and virtuous actions of their lives, in their constant patience and suffering for the truth, if God shall call us thereto. And we may be like them, if we do but sincerely endeavour it, and pray to God for his grace and assistance to that end. For these examples were not left for our admiration only, but for our imitation. We frequently read the lives of the Apostles and first founders of our religion; but I know not how it comes to pass, we chuse rather lazily to admire them, than vigorously to follow them; as if the piety of the first Chri-

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ſtians were miraculous, and not at all intended for the imitation of ſucceeding ages; as if heaven and earth, God and men, and all things, were altered ſince that time; as if Chriſtianity were then in its youthful age and vigour, but is ſince decayed, and grown old, and hath quite loſt its power and virtue. And indeed the generality of Chriſtians live at ſuch a faint and careleſs rate, as to make the world believe, that either all the ſtories of the primitive Chriſtians are fables; or elſe, that the force of Chriſtianity is ſtrangely abated, and that the Holy Spirit of God hath forſaken the earth, and is retired to the Father. But truth never grows old; and thoſe laws of goodneſs and righteouſneſs which are contained in the goſpel, are ſtill as reaſonable, and apt to gain upon the minds of men, as ever. God is the ſame he was, and our bleſſed Saviour is ſtill at the right hand of God, interceeding powerfully for ſinners, for *mercy and grace to help in time of need*. The promiſes and threatenings of the goſpel are ſtill as true and powerful as ever; and the Holy Spirit of God is ſtill in the world, and effectually works in them that believe.

Let us not then deceive ourſelves in this matter. The primitive Chriſtians were *men like ourſelves, ſubject to the ſame paſſions that we are*, and *compaſſed about with the ſame infirmities*: ſo that although that extraordinary ſpirit and power of miracles which God endued them withal, for the firſt planting and propagating of the goſpel in the world, be now ceaſed; yet the ſanctifying power and virtue of God's Holy Spirit does ſtill accompany the goſpel, and is ready to aſſiſt us in every good work.

In a word, we have all that is neceſſary to work the ſame graces and virtues in us which were in them; and, if we be not ſlothful, and wanting to ourſelves, we may *follow their faith*, and at laſt attain *the end of it, even the ſalvation of our ſouls*.

Let us then, from an idle admiring of thoſe excellent patterns, proceed to a vigorous imitation of them, and be ſo far from being diſcouraged by the excellency of them, as to make even that matter and ground of encouragement to ourſelves; according to that of Tertullian, *Admonetur omnis ætas, fieri poſſe, quod aliquando factum eſt*: "All

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"All ages to the end of the world may be convinced, "that what hath been done, is possible to be done." There have been such holy and excellent persons in the world; and therefore it is possible for men to be such.

Let us not then *be slothful; but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Since we are compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us; looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.*

SERMON LXXVIII.

The encouragement to suffer for Christ, and the danger of denying him.

Preached on All-Saints day.

2 TIM. ii. 11. 12.

It is a faithful saying. For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.

IN the beginning of this chapter, St. Paul encourageth Timothy to continue stedfast in the profession of the gospel, notwithstanding the sufferings which attended it: ℣ 1. *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus;* and ℣ 3. *Thou therefore endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* And, to animate him in his resolution, he quotes a saying, which it seems was well known and firmly believed among Christians; a saying, on the one hand, full of encouragement to those who with patience and constancy suffered for their religion; and, on the other hand, full of terror to those who, for fear of suffering, denied it.

It is a faithful saying. This is a preface used by this

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Apostle, to introduce some remarkable sentence, of more than ordinary weight and concernment: 1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*; and chap. iv. 8. 9. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.* Tit. iii. 8. *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works.* And here in the text, the same preface is used to signify the importance of the saying he was about to mention: *It is a faithful saying: If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.*

The first two sentences are matter of encouragement to those who suffer with Christ, and for him; and are the very same in sense. *If we be dead with him*, that is, if we lay down our lives for the testimony of the truth, as he did, *we shall also live with him*, that is, we shall in like manner be made partakers of immortality, as he is. *If we suffer* (or endure) as he did, *we shall also reign with him* in glory.

The other sentence is matter of terror to those who deny him and his truth: *If we deny him, he also will deny us.* To which is subjoined another saying much to the same sense: *If we believe not*; εἰ ἀπιστοῦμεν, *if we be unfaithful; yet he remaineth faithful; he cannot deny himself:* that is, he will be as good as his word, and make good that solemn threatening which he hath denounced against those who shall, for fear of suffering, deny him and his truth.

The words being thus explained, I shall begin with the *First* part of this remarkable saying, *If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.* This, it seems, was a noted saying among Christians; and whether they had it by tradition of our Saviour, or whether it was in familiar use among the Apostles, as a very proper and powerful argument to keep Christians stedfast to their religion, I cannot determine. It is certain, that sayings to this sense are very frequent, especially in the epistles of St. Paul;

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Paul: Rom. vi. 5. *For if we have been planted together in the likeneſs of his death, we ſhall be alſo in the likeneſs of his reſurrection;* and ℣ 8. *Now if we be dead with Chriſt, we believe that we ſhall alſo live with him.* 2 Cor. iv. 10. *Always bearing about in the body, the dying of our Lord Jeſus, that the life alſo of Jeſus might be made manifeſt in our body;* and ℣ 11. *For we which live, are always delivered unto death for Jeſus ſake, that the life alſo of Jeſus might be made manifeſt in our mortal fleſh.* And Rom. viii. 17. *If ſo be that we ſuffer with him, that we may be alſo glorified together.* Phil. iii. 10. 11. *That I may know him, and the power of his reſurrection, and the fellowſhip of his ſufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the reſurrection of the dead.* 1 Pet. iv. 12. 13. *Beloved, think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though ſome ſtrange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inaſmuch as ye are partakers of Chriſt's ſufferings; that when his glory ſhall be revealed, ye may be glad alſo with exceeding joy.*

You ſee that the ſenſe of this ſaying was in frequent uſe among the Apoſtles, as a powerful argument to encourage Chriſtians to conſtancy in their religion, notwithſtanding the dangers and ſufferings which attended it. *This is a faithful ſaying: If we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him: if we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him.*

And the force of this argument will beſt appear, by taking into conſideration theſe two things:

1. What virtue there is in a firm belief and perſuaſion of a bleſſed immortality in another world, to ſupport and bear up mens ſpirits under the greateſt ſufferings for righteouſneſs ſake; and even to animate them, if God ſhall call them to it, to lay down their lives for their religion.

2. How it may be made out to be reaſonable, for men to embrace and voluntarily to ſubmit to preſent and grievous ſufferings, in hopes of a future happineſs and reward; concerning which we have not, nor perhaps are capable of having, the ſame degree of certainty and aſſurance, which we have of the evils and ſufferings of this preſent life.

I. What virtue there is in a firm belief and perſuaſion

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of a blessed immortality in another world, to support and bear up mens spirits under the greatest sufferings for righteousness sake; and even to animate them, if God shall call them to it, to lay down their lives for their religion.

If men do firmly believe that they shall change this temporal and miserable life for an endless state of happiness and glory, and that they shall meet with a reward of their sufferings infinitely beyond the proportion of them, both in the weight and duration of it; this must needs turn the scales on that side on which there is the greatest weight. And there is a sufficient ground for a firm belief of this. For if any thing can certainly be concluded from the providence of God, this may, that good men shall be happy one time or other; and because they are very often great sufferers in this life, that there is another state remains for them after this life, wherein they shall meet with a full reward of all their sufferings for righteousness sake.

But, besides the reasonableness of this from the consideration of God's providence, we have now a clear and express revelation of it; *life and immortality being brought to light by the gospel.* This St. John tells us is the great promise of the gospel, 1 epist. ii. 25. *This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* And this promise our Saviour most expressly makes to those who suffer for him: Matth. v. 10. 11. 12. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.* Mark. x. 29. 30. *Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, with persecutions,* (that is, so far as a state of persecution would admit); *and in the world to come, eternal life.*

And if such a persuasion be firmly fixed in our minds, the faith of another world, and the assured hope of eternal life and happiness, must needs have a mighty force and efficacy upon the minds of sober and considerate men;

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men; because there is no proportion between suffering for a little while, and being unspeakably and eternally happy. So St. Paul tells us he calculated the matter, Rom. viii. 18. *I reckon*, (says he), *that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* The vast disproportion between the sufferings of a few days, and the joys and glory of eternity, when it is once firmly believed by us, will weigh down all the evils and calamities of this world, and give us courage and constancy under them. For why should *we faint*, if we believe that *our light affliction, which is but for a moment, will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?* as the same St. Paul assures us, 2 Cor. iv. 17. If our minds be but thoroughly possessed with the hopes of a resurrection to a better and happier life, this will make death, attended even with extremity of terror, to be tolerable; as we read of some in that long catalogue of saints and martyrs, Heb. xi. 35. *Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.* It would make a man to rejoice in the ruin and dissolution of *this earthly tabernacle*, to be assured, that *when it is dissolved, we shall have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;* as the same Apostle assures us, 2 Cor. v. 1. Thus you see what virtue there is in the firm belief and persuasion of a better life, to bear up mens spirits under those sufferings and torments which may seem unsupportable to human nature.

And so indeed they would be, without an extraordinary grace and assistance of God to enable them to bear those sufferings which his providence permits them to be exercised withal. But of this extraordinary grace we are assured, not only from the consideration of the attributes and providence of God, but likewise from the express promises and declarations of his word.

The attributes of God, and his providence, give us good ground to believe, that he who loves goodness and righteousness, and hath a peculiar favour and regard for good men, will never suffer his faithful friends and servants to be brought into that distress for righteousness sake, that they shall not be able to endure those evils and

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and afflictions which befal them upon that account: and, if in the course of his providence, any thing happen to them that is above the ordinary constancy and patience of human nature to bear, that in such a case God will extraordinarily interpose, and give them strength and patience, support and comfort, proportionable to the evils and sufferings that are upon them; and that he will either lighten their burden, or add to their strength: he will either mitigate their pain, or increase their patience; either he will check and restrain the effect of natural causes, as in the case of the three children that were in the fiery furnace, and of Daniel, who was cast into the den of lions; or else, which comes to the same issue, if he will suffer causes to have their natural course, he will afford supernatural comforts to balance the fury and extremity of them. This is very credible, from the mere consideration of God's goodness, and of the particular care and favour of his providence towards good men.

But besides this, we have the express promise and declaration of God's word to this purpose, which puts us out of all doubt concerning that which we had good reason to hope and expect before, 1 Cor. x. 13. St. Paul there tells the Christians at Corinth, that though they had met with some troubles, yet they had not been tried with the extremity of suffering; but when that should happen, they had no cause to doubt, but God would enable them to bear it. *There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man;* that is, you have not yet been exercised with any trial, but what is human, what the ordinary strength and resolution of human nature is able to bear: but in case it should come to extreme suffering, and that they must either comply with the Heathen idolatry, or endure extremity of torments, they had the promise of God's help to support them in that case; *God is faithful,* (says he), *who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it:* and then it follows, *Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry;* that is, let no suffering that you are tempted withal, make you guilty of this sin. And, 1 Pet. iv. 14. the presence of God's Spirit,

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Spirit, in a very glorious manner, for our ſupport and comfort, is promiſed to thoſe who ſuffer for him: *If ye be reproached for the name of Chriſt, happy are ye; for the ſpirit of glory, and of God reſteth upon you.*

And this conſideration, of God's ſtrength to ſupport us under ſufferings, makes the other, of the reward of them, a perfect and compleat encouragement; which it could not be without it. For if, upon the whole matter, the preſent ſufferings of good men were intolerable, and human nature were not divinely aſſiſted to bear them, how great ſoever the future reward promiſed to them ſhould be, they that lay under them would be forced to conſult their own preſent eaſe and deliverance. I proceed to the

II. Second thing I propoſed to conſider, namely, How it may be made out to be reaſonable to embrace and voluntarily to ſubmit to preſent and grievous ſufferings, in hopes of future happineſs and reward; concerning which we have not, nor perhaps are capable of having, the ſame degree of certainty and aſſurance which we have of the evils and ſufferings of this preſent life.

Now, granting that we have not the ſame degree of certainty concerning our future happineſs that we have of our preſent ſufferings, which we feel, or ſee juſt ready to come upon us; yet prudence making it neceſſary for men to run this hazard, does juſtify the reaſonableneſs of it. This I take to be a known and ruled caſe in the common affairs of life, and in matters of temporal concernment; and men act upon this principle every day. The huſbandman parts with his corn, and caſts it into the earth, in confidence that it will ſpring up again, and at the time of harveſt bring him in a conſiderable return and advantage. He parts with a certainty, in hope only of a great future benefit: and though he have no demonſtration for the infallible ſucceſs of his labour and hazard, yet he acts very reaſonably; becauſe if he does not take this courſe, he runs a greater and more certain hazard, of periſhing by famine at laſt, when his preſent ſtock is ſpent. The caſe of the merchant is the ſame, who parts with a preſent eſtate, in hopes of a future improvement; which is yet not ſo certain as what he parts withal.

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And if this be reasonable in these cases, then the hazard which men run, upon much greater assurance than either the husbandman or the merchant hath, is much more reasonable. When we part with this life in hopes of one infinitely better, that is, in sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life; and when we submit to present sufferings, to avoid an eternity of misery, which is much more to be dreaded than temporal want, this is reasonable; because here is a much greater advantage in view, and a more pressing necessity in the case; nothing being so desirable to one that must live for ever, as to be happy for ever; and nothing to be avoided by him with so much care, as everlasting misery and ruin. And for our security of obtaining the one, and escaping the other, we have *the promise of God, who cannot lie*; which is all the certainty and security that things future and invisible are capable of.

Nay, I will go lower. If God had made no express promise and declaration of a future happiness and reward to those that serve him, and suffer for him; yet, if any man, out of a sincere love to God, and awful regard to his laws, endure trouble and affliction, if there be a God and providence, this is assurance enough to us, that our services and sufferings shall one time or other be considered and rewarded. For as sure as any man is that there is a God, and that his providence regards the actions of men; so sure are we that no man shall finally be a loser by any thing that he doth or suffers for him.

So that the matter is now brought to this plain issue, that if it be reasonable to believe there is a God, and that his providence regards and considers the actions of men; it is also reasonable to endure present sufferings, in hope of a future reward: and there is certainly enough in this case to govern and determine a prudent man, that is in any good measure persuaded of another life after this, and hath any tolerable consideration of, and regard to his eternal interest.

Indeed, if we were sure, that there were no life after this; if we had no expectation of a happiness or misery beyond this world; the wisest thing that any man could do, would be to enjoy as much of the present contentments and satisfactions of this world as he could fairly come

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come at. For *if there be no reſurrection* to another life, the Apoſtle allows the reaſoning of the epicure to be very good, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die.* But, on the other hand, if it be true that we are deſigned for immortality, and that another ſtate remains for us after this life, wherein we ſhall be unſpeakably happy, or intolerably and eternally miſerable, according as we have behaved ourſelves in this world; it is then evidently reaſonable, that men ſhould take the greateſt care of the longeſt duration, and be content to bear and diſpenſe with ſome preſent trouble and inconvenience, for a felicity that will have no end; and be willing to labour and take pains, and deny our preſent eaſe and comfort for a little while, that we may be happy for ever. This is reckoned prudence in the account of this world, for a man to part with a preſent poſſeſſion and enjoyment, for a much greater advantage in reverſion. But ſurely the diſproportion between time and eternity is ſo vaſt, that did men but firmly believe that they ſhall live for ever, nothing in this world could reaſonably be thought too good to part withal, or too grievous to ſuffer, for the obtaining of a bleſſed immortality.

In the virtue of this belief and perſuaſion, the primitive Chriſtians were fortified againſt all that the malice and cruelty of the world could do againſt them: and they thought they made a very wiſe bargain, if *through many tribulations they might* at laſt *enter into the kingdom of God;* becauſe they believed, that the joys of heaven would abundantly recompenſe all their ſorrows and ſufferings upon earth. And ſo confident were they of this, that they looked upon it as a ſpecial favour and regard of God to them, to call them to ſuffer for his name. So St. Paul ſpeaks of it, Phil. i. 29. *Unto you it is given, in the behalf of Chriſt, not only to believe on him, but alſo to ſuffer for his ſake.* Yea, they accounted them happy, who upon this account were miſerable in this world. So St. James expreſsly pronounceth them, chap. i. 12. *Bleſſed is the man that endureth temptation,* (meaning the temptation of perſecution and ſuffering): *for when he is tried, he ſhall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him.* And this conſideration was that which kept up their ſpirits from ſinking under

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der the weight of their greatest sufferings. So St. Paul tells us, 2 Cor. iv. 14. 16. *Knowing, that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.* The sufferings of their bodies did but help to raise and fortify their spirits. Nay, so far were they from fainting under those afflictions, that they rejoiced and gloried in them. So the same Apostle tells us, Rom. v. 2. 3. that, in the midst of their sufferings, they *rejoiced in hope of the glory of God*; and that they *gloried in tribulations*, as being the way to be made partakers of that glory: and Heb. x. 34. that they *took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.* And for this reason, St. James, chap. i. 2. exhorts Christians to *account it all joy when they fall into divers temptations*, that is, various kinds of sufferings, because of the manifold advantages which from thence would redound to them.

Now, what was it that inspired them to all this courage and chearfulness, but the belief of a mighty reward, far beyond the proportion of all their sufferings, and a firm persuasion that they should be vast gainers by them at the last? This consideration St. Paul urgeth with great force, 2 Cor. iv. 17. 18. *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal.* If we could compare things justly, and attentively regard and consider the invisible glories of another world, as well as *the things which are seen*; we should easily perceive, that he who suffers for God and religion, does not renounce happiness; but puts it out to interest, upon terms of the greatest advantage.

I shall now speak briefly to the

Second part of this remarkable saying in the text: *If we deny him, he also will deny us.* To which is subjoined in the words following, *If we believe not; εἰ ἀπιστοῦμεν, if we deal unfaithfully with him; yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself*; that is, he will be constant to his word,

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word, and make good that ſoleman threatening which he hath denounced againſt thoſe who, for fear of ſuffering, ſhall deny him and his truth before men: Matth. x. 33. *Whoſoever* (ſaith our Lord there) *ſhall deny me before men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which is in heaven.* Mark viii. 38. *Whoſoever therefore ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.* This is a terrible threatening, to be diſowned by Chriſt at the day of judgment, in the preſence of God and his holy angels; and this threatening will certainly be made good: and though we may renounce him, and break our faith with him, *yet he remains faithful* who hath threatened, and *cannot deny himſelf.*

This is matter of great terror, and ſeriouſly to be thought upon by thoſe who are tempted to deny Chriſt and his truth, either by the hope of worldly advantage, or the fear of temporal ſufferings. What worldly advantage can we propoſe to ourſelves, by quitting our religion, which can be thought an equal price, for the loſs of our immortal ſouls, and of the happineſs of all eternity? Suppoſe the whole world were offered us in conſideration; yet *what is a man profited, if he ſhould gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* as our Saviour reaſons, Matth. xvi. 26.

And, on the other hand, if the fear of temporal ſuffering be ſuch a terror to men, as to ſhake their conſtancy in religion, and to tempt them to renounce it; the fear of eternal torments ought to be much more powerful to keep them ſtedfaſt to their religion, and to deter them from the denial of it. If fear will move us, then, in all reaſon, that which is moſt terrible ought to prevail moſt with us, and the greateſt danger ſhould be moſt dreaded by us; according to our Saviour's moſt friendly and reaſonable advice, Luke xii. 4. 5. *I ſay unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye ſhall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into hell; yea, I ſay unto you, Fear him.* If there can be no doubt which of them is moſt to be

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dreaded, there can be no doubt what we are to do in case of such a temptation.

I shall now draw some inferences from this discourse by way of application.

1. If *this* be *a faithful saying, that if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; but if we deny him, he will also deny us:* the belief of it ought to have a mighty influence upon us, to make us stedfast and unmoveable in the profession and practice of our holy religion. This inference the Apostle makes from the doctrine of a blessed resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 58. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* If any thing will fix men in the profession of their religion, and make them serious in the practice of it; the belief of a glorious resurrection, and of the reward which God will then give to his faithful servants, must needs have a very powerful influence upon them to this purpose. Upon the same ground the Apostle to the Hebrews exhorts them to *hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering; because he is faithful that hath promised.* If we be constant in the profession and practice of our holy religion, God will be faithful to the promise which he hath made, of *eternal life to those who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality.*

If, under the dark and imperfect dispensation of the law, good men shewed so much courage and constancy for God and religion, as we read in that long catalogue of heroes, Heb. xi.; how much more should Christians, whose faith is supported much more strongly than theirs was, by a much clearer evidence of another life, and a blessed immortality, than they had; by more express promises of divine comfort and assistance under sufferings, than were made to them; and by the most divine and encouraging example of the greatest patience under the greatest sufferings that the world ever had, in the death and passion of the Son of God, *who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God?* When we consider this glorious example of suffering, and

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and the glorious reward of it, how can we *be weary and faint in our minds?* If the saints and apostles of the Old Testament did such great things, by virtue of a faith which relied chiefly upon the attributes and providence of God; what should not we do, who have the security of God's express promise for our comfort and encouragement! We certainly have much greater reason to take up our cross more chearfully, and to bear it more patiently, than they did.

2. We should always be prepared in the resolutions of our minds, to suffer for the testimony of God's truth and a good conscience, if it should please God at any time to call us to it. This our Saviour hath made a necessary condition of his religion, and a qualification of a true disciple: *If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross, and follow me.* So that we are to reckon upon it, and to prepare for it; that if it comes, we may not be surprised, *as if some strange thing had happened to us;* and may not be unresolved what to do in such a case. And God knows when we may be called to it: however, it is wise to forecast it in our minds, and to be always in a preparation and readiness to entertain the worst that may happen; that if it come, we may *be able to stand out in an evil day.* And if it does not come, God will accept the resolution of our minds, and reward it according to the sincerity of it: he that knows what we would have done, will consider it as if we had done it.

3. The less we are called to suffer for God, the more we should think ourselves obliged to do for him; the less God is pleased to exercise our patience, we should abound so much the more in the active virtues of a good life, and our obedience to God should be so much the more chearful, and we more *fruitful in every good work.* If there be no need of sealing the truth with our blood, we should be sure to adorn and recommend it by our lives.

4. and lastly, If the hopes of immortality will bear men up under the extremity of suffering and torments, and give men courage and resolution against all the terrors of the world; they ought much more to make us victorious over the temptations and allurements of it. For certainly it is in reason much easier to forego pleasure, than to endure pain; to refuse or lay down a good

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place for the teſtimony of a good conſcience, than to lay down our lives upon that account. And in vain does any man pretend that he will be a martyr for his religion, when he will not rule an appetite, nor reſtrain a luſt, nor ſubdue a paſſion, nor croſs his covetouſneſs and ambition, for the ſake of it, and *in hope of that eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promiſed.* He that refuſeth to do the leſs, is not like to do the greater. It is very improbable, that a man will die for his religion, when he cannot be perſuaded to live according to it. So that by this we may try the ſincerity of our reſolution concerning martyrdom. For what profeſſion ſoever men make, he that will not *deny himſelf* the pleaſures of ſin, and the advantages of this world, for Chriſt; when it comes to the puſh, will never have the heart to *take up his croſs, and follow him.* He that cannot take up a reſolution to live a ſaint, hath a demonſtration within himſelf, that he is never like to die a martyr.

SERMON LXXIX.

The bleſſedneſs of good men after death.

Preached on All-Saints day.

REV. xiv. 13.

And I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, Write, Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours; and their works do follow them.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

I Will not trouble you with any nice diſpute about the author of this book of the Revelation, or the authority of it, though both theſe were ſometimes controverted; becauſe it is now many ages ſince this book was received into the canon of the ſcriptures, as of divine authority, and as written by St. John. Nor ſhall I at this time

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time inquire into the particular meaning of the ſeveral viſions and predictions contained in it. It is confeſſedly, in ſeveral parts of it, a very obſcure book: and there needs no other argument to ſatisfy us that it is ſo, than that ſo many learned and inquiſitive perſons have given ſuch different interpretations of ſeveral remarkable paſſages in it; as particularly concerning the ſlaying of the two witneſſes, and the number of the beaſt.

The words which I have read to you, though there be ſome difficulty about the interpretation of ſome particular expreſſions in them; yet, in the general ſenſe and intendment of them, they are very plain, being a ſolemn declaration of the bleſſed ſtate of good men after this life.

And that we may take the more notice of them, they are brought in with a great deal of ſolemn preparation and addreſs, as it were on purpoſe to beſpeak our attention to them: *I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, Write, Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth.* And, for the greater confirmation of them, the ſpecial teſtimony of *the Spirit* is added to *the voice from heaven*, declaring the reaſon why they *that die in the Lord* are pronounced to be in ſo happy a condition: *Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

In the handling of theſe words, I ſhall, 1. inquire into the particular ſenſe and meaning of them.

2. Proſecute the general intendment of them; which, I told you, is to declare to us the bleſſed ſtate of thoſe that die in the Lord; that is, of ſaints and good men after they are departed this life.

1. I ſhall inquire into the particular ſenſe and meaning of the words. To the clearing of which, nothing will conduce more, than to conſider the occaſion of them; which was briefly this. In the viſions of this and the foregoing chapter, is repreſented to St. John, the great ſtraits that the Chriſtians, the true worſhippers of the true God, ſhould be reduced to. On the one hand, they are threatened with death; or if they be ſuffered to live, they are interdicted all commerce with human ſociety, chap. xiii. 15. *And he had power to cauſe, that as many as would not worſhip the image of the beaſt, ſhould be*

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killed; and ℣ 17. *That no man might buy or ſell, ſave he that had the mark of the beaſt.* And, on the other hand, they that do *worſhip the beaſt*, are threatened with damnation, chap. xiv. 9. 10. *If any man do worſhip the beaſt, the ſame ſhall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, and ſhall be tormented with fire and brimſtone.* So that, whenever this ſhould happen, it would be a time of great trial to the ſincere Chriſtians, being threatened with extreme perſecution on the one hand, and eternal damnation on the other; and therefore it is added in the 12th verſe, *Here is the patience of the ſaints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jeſus.* This is repreſented in St. John's viſions, as the laſt and extremeſt perſecution of the true worſhippers of God, and which ſhould preceed the final downfal of Babylon. And when this ſhould happen, then he tells us, *the patience of the ſaints* would be tried to purpoſe, and then it would be ſeen who are faithful to God, and conſtant to his truth; and upon this immediately follows *the voice from heaven* in the text: *And I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, Write, Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

The main difficulty of the words depends upon the word ἀπάρτι, *from henceforth;* which interpreters do variouſly refer to ſeveral parts of the text. Some, by changing the accent, and reading it, ἅπαρτι, would change the ſignification of the word into *omninò; Omninò beati ſunt; They are altogether bleſſed, very happy, who die in the Lord.* But this is altogether deſtitute of the countenance and warrant of any ancient copy. We will then ſuppoſe that the word is ἀπ᾽ἄρτι, and to be rendered as we tranſlate it, *from henceforth, from this time.* All the difficulty is, to what part of the text we are to refer it. Some refer it to the word *bleſſed: Bleſſed from henceforth are the dead which die in the Lord:* as if from this time, and not before, the ſouls of good men were immediately after death admitted into heaven; which, many of the ancient fathers thought, the ſouls of good men who died before the coming of Chriſt were not. But then this bleſſedneſs ought to have been dated, not from

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from the time of St. John's vision, but of Christ's ascension; according to that of St. Ambrose, in the hymn called *Te Deum*, "When thou hadst overcome the "sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of "heaven to all believers."

Others refer it to *dying in the Lord: Blessed are the dead that from henceforth die in the Lord.* But this hath no peculiar emphasis in it, because they were *blessed that died in the Lord* before that time.

Others refer it to the words following, concerning the testimony of the Spirit: *Yea, from henceforth saith the Spirit.* All these varieties agree in this sense in general, that some special blessedness is promised and declared to those who should die after that time: but what that is in particular, is not easy to make out.

But the most plain and simple interpretation, and that which seems to be most suitable to the occasion of these words is this, that the word ἀπάρτι, *from henceforth,* is to be referred to the whole sentence, thus: *From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord:* as if St. John had said, Considering the extremity and cruel circumstances of this last and severe persecution, we may from that time forward reckon those who are already dead (supposing that *they died in the Lord)* to be very happy, in that they did not live to see and suffer those things which will then befal the faithful servants of God, when *the devil shall come, having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time:* much in the same sense as Solomon, when he *considered the oppressions that were done under the sun,* says, Eccl. iv. 2. that he *praised the dead which were already dead, more than the living which were yet alive;* that is, considering the oppressions which were so frequent in the world, he reckoned those happier that were out of it, than those who still lived in it.

And as this is very agreeable to the scope of what goes before, so it suits very well with what follows after, as the reason why those persons are declared to be so happy: *Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them;* that is, that they may be at an end of their troubles and sufferings, and may not be tried beyond their strength and patience under

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under that terrible perſecution which will reign at that time; and likewiſe that they may receive the reward of all the good they have done and the evils they have ſuffered in this world: in the very ſame ſenſe, that *the righteous* are ſaid to be *taken away from the evil to come*, Iſ. lvii. 1. 2. *The righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He ſhall enter into peace: they ſhall reſt in their beds, each one walking in his uprightneſs*; that is, enjoying the comfort of his integrity and ſincerity towards God.

And now, the main difficulty being over, we ſhall need to trouble ourſelves the leſs about the other expreſſions in the text; yet there are two which I ſhall a little explain to you.

1. What is here meant by *dying in the Lord*. And this ſort of phraſe, *in the Lord*, *in Chriſt*, and *in the name of Chriſt*, is uſed in ſcripture very variouſly. In general it ſignifies, *the doing or ſuffering any thing, with relation to Chriſt, and upon his account*; and ſo *to die in the Lord* doth moſt frequently ſignify to *die in the faith of Chriſt, and the profeſſion of the Chriſtian religion*. Sometimes it ſignifies to *die for his cauſe*, and to *bear teſtimony to his truth*; which is therefore called *martyrdom*, as St. Paul is ſaid to be δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ, Eph. iv. 1. *a priſoner in the Lord*; that is, *for his cauſe*. So likewiſe St. Peter: *If ye be reproached* ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, *in the name of Chriſt*; *happy are ye*. And it is probable, that the expreſſion, 1 Cor. xv. 18. *Then they alſo which are fallen aſleep in Chriſt*, is to be underſtood of *thoſe that died for his cauſe*; becauſe it follows immediately, *If in this life only we have hope in Chriſt, we are of all men moſt miſerable*; that is, conſidering how much Chriſtians ſuffered for him in this life, they were in a moſt miſerable condition, if there were nothing to be expected beyond it: but eſpecially if we conſider the parallel phraſe, 1 Theſſ. iv. 14. *So them alſo that ſleep in Jeſus*, διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, *for Jeſus ſake*, (that is, *them that have ſuffered martyrdom for him*), *will God bring with him*. And in this ſenſe many underſtand the phraſe in the text, as ſpoken of martyrs: *Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord*; that is, *for his cauſe*. And though I think the phraſe may well enough be underſtood more generally, yet I ſhall

shall not reject this sense; because it is not unsuitable to the scope and occasion of the words. For considering that last and extreme persecution which he had described, it was not altogether improper to pronounce those happy, that had suffered martyrdom already, and were taken away from those dreadful calamities, which in these last days of antichrist were to fall upon the faithful servants of Christ.

2. The other expression is the last in the text, *And their works do follow them.* So we render the word ἀκολουθεῖ; which yet does most properly signify *to accompany* or *go along with one:* and so indeed the expression will rather be more emphatical, *They rest from their labours; and their works accompany them.*

But whether the word be rendered, *to follow*, or *to accompany*, the difference is not very material.

Thus you see what the particular sense and meaning of the words probably is, to declare the happy estate of those saints or martyrs who were already dead, in and for the faith of Christ; and should not live to see those cruel and fearful sufferings which should afterwards come upon the Christians. But then this is grounded upon that general truth, That they are happy that *die in the Lord.* And this is that which I intend now to prosecute, abstracting from the particular occasion upon which these words were spoken. Which brings me to the

II. Second thing I propounded, and chiefly designed to handle upon the occasion of this day, namely, the happy estate of good men after they have departed out of this life. And, in speaking to this, I shall confine myself to two particulars, which the text mentions as the reasons and grounds, why they *that die in the Lord* are declared to be in so *blessed* a condition: *Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

1. Good men, when they are departed this life, are freed from all the labours and pains they were exercised with in this world: *That they may rest from their labours.*

2. They reap the comfort and reward of all the good which they have done in this world: *And their works do follow*

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follow them, or rather *go along with them*, to receive the reward which God hath promiſed to *them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality.*

1. Thoſe who *die in the Lord*, are freed from the evils and miſeries of this life. And this is ſo great a felicity, that ſome, and thoſe who think themſelves no ſmall philoſophers, have placed the chief happineſs of man in freedom from pain and trouble. But though happineſs do not conſiſt in this alone; yet it cannot be denied to be a great part of it: for though ſome have been ſo fantaſtically obſtinate, as, againſt the reaſon and common ſenſe of mankind, to maintain this paradox, That "a wiſe man may be as happy upon the rack, or in "Phalaris's bull, as in the greateſt eaſe, and freedom "from pain, that can be imagined;" yet nature cries ſhame of this hypocriſy: and there are none of thoſe wiſe men they ſpeak of were ever ſuch fools as to try the experiment, and to ſhew by their actions, that it was indifferent to them, whether they laid themſelves down upon their beds every night, or were ſtretched upon a rack; which yet ought to have been indifferent to them, had they believed themſelves, and really eſteemed that which others account pain, to be as happy a condition as that which is commonly called eaſe.

But we need not trouble ourſelves to confute ſo ſtupid a principle, which is confuted by nature, and by every man's ſenſe and experience. I think we may take it for granted, that freedom from miſery is a very conſiderable part of happineſs; otherwiſe heaven and hell, if we conſider only the torment of it, would be all one. But certainly it is no ſmall endearment of religion to the common ſenſe of mankind, that it promiſeth to us in the next life a freedom from all the evils and troubles of this. And by this the happineſs of heaven is frequently deſcribed to us in ſcripture: Iſ. lvii. 2. ſpeaking of *the righteous man, He ſhall enter into peace: they ſhall reſt in their beds.* 2 Theſſ. i. 6, 7. where the Apoſtle ſpeaking of the reward of thoſe who ſhould ſuffer perſecution for religion, *It is a righteous thing with God* (ſays he) *to recompenſe to you who are troubled, reſt with us, when the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from heaven, with*

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with his mighty angels. And the Apoſtle to the Hebrews frequently deſcribes the happineſs of Chriſtians, by *entering into reſt.* And Rev. xxi. 4. the ſtate of the new Jeruſalem is ſet forth to us, by deliverance from thoſe troubles and ſorrows which men are ſubject to in this world: *And God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain: for the former things are paſſed away.*

Thus it is with us in this world; we are liable to ſorrow, and pain, and death. But when we are once got to heaven, none of theſe things ſhall approach us: *The former things are paſſed away*; that is, the evils we formerly endured are paſt and over, and ſhall never return to afflict us any more.

And is not this a great comfort, when we are labouring under the evils of this life, and conflicting ſorely with the miſeries of it, that we ſhall one day be paſt all theſe, and find a ſafe refuge and retreat from all theſe ſtorms and tempeſts: when we are loaded with afflictions, and even tired with the burden of them, and ready to faint and ſink under it; to think that there remains a reſt for us into which we ſhall ſhortly enter? How can it chuſe but be a mighty conſolation to us, whilſt we are in this vale of tears and troubles, to be aſſured that the time is coming, when *God ſhall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there ſhall be no more ſorrow nor crying?*

There are none of us, but are obnoxious to any of the evils of this life; we feel ſome of them, and we fear more. Our outward condition, it may be, is uncomfortable; we are poor and perſecuted; we are deſtitute of friends, or have many enemies; we are deſpoiled of many of thoſe comforts and enjoyments which we once had: our bodies perhaps are in pain, or our ſpirits troubled; or though we have no real cauſe of outward trouble, yet our ſouls are ill lodged in the dark dungeon of a body overpowered with a melancholy humour, which keeps out all light and comfort from our minds.

And is it no reviving to us, to think of that happy hour, when we ſhall find a remedy and redreſs of all theſe evils at once; of that bleſſed place, where we ſhall take

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ſanctuary from all thoſe afflictions and troubles which purſued us in this world; where ſorrow, and miſery, and death, are perfect ſtrangers, and into which nothing that can render men in the leaſt unhappy, can ever enter; where our ſouls ſhall be in perfect reſt and contentment, and our bodies after a while ſhall be reſtored and reunited to our ſouls; not to cloud and clog them, as they do here, but ſo happily changed and refined to ſuch a perfection, that they ſhall be ſo far from giving any diſturbance to our minds, that they ſhall mightily add to their pleaſure and happineſs?

And when we are once landed in thoſe bleſſed regions, what a comfort will it be to us, to ſtand on the ſhore, and look back upon thoſe rough and dangerous ſeas which we have eſcaped? how pleaſant to conſider the manifold evils and calamities which we are freed from, and for ever ſecured againſt? to remember our paſt labours and ſufferings, and to be able to defy all thoſe temptations, which were wont to aſſault us in this world with ſo much violence, and with too much ſucceſs?

And this is the condition of the bleſſed ſpirits above. They find a perfect ceſſation of all afflictions and troubles: *They reſt from their labours.* But this is not all: for,

2. They are not only freed from all the evils and ſufferings they were exerciſed withal in this world, but they ſhall receive a plentiful reward of all the good they have done in it: *Their works do accompany them.* When pious ſouls go out of this world, they do not only leave all the evils of the world behind them, but they carry along with them all the good they have done, to reap there the comfort and reward of it. Juſt as, on the other hand, wicked men, when they die, leave all the good things of this world, all the pleaſures and enjoyments, behind them; but the guilt and remorſe of their wicked lives accompany them, and ſtick cloſe to them, to torment them there, and that there they may be tormented for them.

Thus the ſcriptures repreſent to us the different condition of good and bad men, Iſ. iii. 10. 11. *Say ye to the righteous, that it ſhall be well with him: for they ſhall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked, it ſhall be*

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ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him. Which is many times true in this world; but however that happen, will most certainly and remarkably be made good in the other. And this is most emphatically expressed to us in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 25. where the rich man petitions Abraham for some ease, and Abraham returns him this answer, *Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* What a change was here! how comfortable to the one, and how dismal to the other! Lazarus found *rest from* all *his labours* and sufferings, and his piety and patience *accompanied him* into the other world, and conveyed him into Abraham's bosom: whereas the rich man was parted from all *his good things*, and the guilt of his sins went along with him, and lodged him in the place of torment.

But my text confines me to the bright side of this prospect; the consideration of that glorious recompence which good men shall receive for the good works which they have done in this world. Indeed the text doth not expressly say, that *their works shall be rewarded;* but that *they shall go along with them*, and that they are blessed upon this account: and this implies that they shall receive a sure reward. For, as the Apostle reasons, *God is not unrighteous to forget* our *work and labour of love. Verily there is a reward for the righteous;* as sure as *there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

But how great and glorious that shall be, I am not in any measure able to declare to you. It may suffice, that the scripture hath assured us in general, that God is the rewarder of good men; and that he will make them happy, not according to what can now enter into our narrow thoughts, but *according to the exceeding greatness of his power* and goodness. If we are to receive our reward from God, we need not doubt but it will be very large, and such as is every way worthy of him to bestow. For he is *a great king*, and of great goodness; and we may safely refer ourselves to him, in confidence that he will consider us, not according to the meanness of our service, but according to the vastness of his treasures, and the infinite bounty of his mind. If he hath

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promiſed to make us happy, though he hath not particularly declared to us wherein this happineſs ſhall conſiſt; yet we may truſt him that made us, to find out ways to make us happy; and may believe, that he who made us without our knowledge or deſire, is able to make us happy beyond them both.

Only, for the greater encouragement of our holineſs and obedience, though he hath promiſed to reward every good man far beyond the proportion of any good he hath or can do; yet he hath declared, that theſe rewards ſhall be proportionably greater or leſs, according to the degree of every man's piety and virtue. So our Saviour tells us, that *they who are perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, great ſhall be their reward in heaven*, Matth. v. 12.: that there will be a difference between the reward of *a righteous man* and *a prophet*; that is, of one who is more publickly and eminently uſeful for the ſalvation of others. And among thoſe who are teachers of others, they that are more induſtrious, and conſequently more likely to be ſucceſsful in this work, ſhall have a more glorious reward; as we are told by the angel, Dan. xii. 3. *And they that be wiſe*, (or as it is in the margin rendered, *they that be teachers*), *ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever.* So likewiſe we find in the parable of the talents, that he that improved his talent to ten, was made *ruler over ten cities.* And St. Paul, 2 Cor. ix. 6. ſpeaking of the degrees of mens charity and liberality towards the poor, ſays expreſsly, *He that ſoweth ſparingly, ſhall reap ſparingly; but he that ſoweth bountifully, ſhall reap bountifully*; which by proportion of reaſon may be extended to the exerciſe of all other graces and virtues. 1 Cor. xv. 41. 42. the Apoſtle there repreſents the different degrees of glory, which good men ſhall be inveſted with at the reſurrection, by the different glory and ſplendor of the heavenly luminaries: *There is one glory of the ſun, another of the moon, and another glory of the ſtars; for one ſtar differeth from another ſtar in glory. So alſo is the reſurrection of the dead.* So that the more any man ſuffers for God, and the more patiently he ſuffers, the more holily and virtuouſly, the more charitably and uſefully he lives in this world; the more

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more good works will accompany him into the next, and the greater and more glorious reward he may hope to receive there: which, as the Apostle reasons, in the conclusion of that chapter concerning the doctrine of the resurrection, ought to be a mighty encouragement to every one of us, not only to be *stedfast and unmoveable*, (that is, fixed and resolute in the profession and practice of our religion), but *abounding* likewise *in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know, that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

Every degree of diligence and industry in the work and service of God, will most certainly one day turn to a happy account. *Having therefore such promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* The more perfectly holy we are here on earth, the more perfectly happy we shall be in heaven, and continue so to all eternity.

I have now done with the two reasons which are here given in the text, of the happiness that good men, such as *die in the Lord*, shall be made partakers of in another life; because *they rest from their labours, and their works accompany them*; they are freed from all the evils which they suffered, and shall receive the reward of all the good they have done in this life.

I should now have proceeded to make some inferences from this discourse; but those I will reserve for another discourse on this subject.

All that I shall add at present, as the application of what I have already said, is, that this should stir us up to a careful and zealous imitation of those blessed persons described in the text, who are *dead in the Lord*, and are at *rest from their labours*, and whose *works do accompany them.* Let us imitate them in their faith and patience, in their piety and good works, and in their constancy to God and his truth, which was dearer to them than their lives.

Thus their virtues and sufferings are described in the visions of this book: chap. xiii. 10. *Here is the patience and the faith of the saints;* and chap. xiv. 12. *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus;* and chap. xii. 11. *And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by*

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the word of their teſtimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

In this way, and by theſe ſteps, all the ſaints and martyrs of all ages have aſcended up to heaven, and attained to that bleſſed ſtate, which they are now poſſeſſed of, after all the evils which they ſuffered in this world. They are now at *reſt from their labours*, and all the good works which they have done are gone along with them; and they are now, and ſhall for ever be, receiving the comfort and reward of them. And if we tread in their ſteps, by a zealous imitation of the piety and holineſs of their lives, and of the conſtancy and patience of their ſufferings, we ſhall one day be tranſlated into their bleſſed ſociety, and made partakers with them of the ſame glorious reward. If we *have our fruit unto holineſs*, our *end* ſhall be *everlaſting life*. If we *be faithful unto death*, we *ſhall receive a crown of life*.

Let us then, as the Apoſtle to the Hebrews exhorts, chap. vi. 11. 12. *every one of us ſhew the ſame diligence, to the full aſſurance of hope unto the end: and let us not be ſlothful; but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes.*

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great ſhepherd of the ſheep, through the blood of the everlaſting covenant, make you perfect in every good word and *work, working in you that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight.*

SERMON

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SERMON LXXX.

The bleſſedneſs of good men after death.

REV. xiv. 13.

And I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, Write, Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours; and their works do follow them.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

IN my explication of theſe words I told you, that they are, in the general ſenſe and meaning of them, a ſolemn declaration of the bleſſed eſtate of good men after this life; but delivered upon a ſpecial occaſion, as is ſignified by that expreſſion, *from henceforth*; that is, *from the time of that viſion*, in which was repreſented to St. John, the laſt and extremeſt perſecution of the faithful ſervants of Chriſt, and which would preceed the fatal downfal of Babylon: *From that time, bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord;* that is, Conſidering the extremity, and the cruel circumſtances of this laſt and ſevereſt perſecution, we may, from that time forward, reckon thoſe who are already dead, ſuppoſing that they died in the Lord, to be very happy, in that they do not live to ſee and ſuffer thoſe grievous things which then will befal the faithful ſervants of God.

In my former diſcourſe I conſidered the words according to the general intention of them, abſtracting from the particular occaſion upon which they were ſpoken; endeavouring to ſet forth the happy eſtate of good men after this life, from the two reaſons and grounds mentioned in the text, namely, becauſe *they reſt from their labours*, and becauſe *their works do follow*, or *accompany*, and *go along with them:* which two particulars conſtitute the happineſs of the future ſtate.

That which farther remains, and to which I now proceed, is, to make ſome inferences from what I have ſaid

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upon this ſubject. And, in doing this, I ſhall have an eye on the ſpecial occaſion of the words, as well as on their general intention. And the inferences ſhall be theſe following.

1. If thoſe that *die in the Lord* are *at reſt from their labours* and pains, then the text concludes directly againſt the feigned purgatory of the church of Rome, which ſuppoſeth a great number of thoſe that *die in the Lord*, and have *obtained eternal redemption* by him from hell, not to paſs immediately into happineſs; but to be detained in the ſuburbs of hell, in great pain and torment, till their ſouls be purged, and the debt of temporary puniſhment, to which they are liable, be ſome way or other paid off and diſcharged.

2. Here is a mighty encouragement to piety and virtue, to conſider, that all the good we do in this world will accompany us into the other.

3. It is a great encouragement to patience under the ſufferings and perſecutions which attend good men in this world, that how heavy and grievous ſoever they are at preſent, they will end with this life, and we ſhall then *reſt from* all *our labours*.

4. The conſideration of the extreme ſufferings of Chriſtians in the laſt times, and which perhaps are not far from us, ſhould render us very indifferent to life, and all the enjoyments of it, ſo as even to eſteem it a particular grace and favour of God, to be *taken away from the evil to come*, and, by death, to prevent, if he ſees it good, thoſe extremities of ſufferings which ſeem to be haſtening upon the world.

I. If thoſe *that die in the Lord* are at *reſt from* all *their labours* and pains; then this text concludes directly againſt the feigned purgatory of the church of Rome, which ſuppoſeth a great number, yea the far greateſt part of thoſe *that die in the Lord*, and have *obtained eternal redemption* by him from hell, not to paſs immediately into happineſs, but to be detained ſomewhere (they are not certain where, but moſt probably in the ſuburbs of hell) in great pain and torment, equal in degree to that of hell, and differing only in duration; I ſay, to be detained there, till their ſouls be purged from the defilements they have contracted in this world, and the debt of

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of temporary punishments, to which they are liable, be some way or other paid off and discharged.

They suppose indeed some very few holy men to be so perfect at their departure out of this life, that they do immediately, and without any stop, pass into heaven, because they need no purgation; and those likewise who suffer martyrdom, because they discharge their debt of temporary punishments here: but the generality of Christians *who die in the Lord*, they suppose so imperfect, as to stand in need of being purged by fire; and accordingly that they are detained a longer or shorter time, as their debt of temporary punishments is greater or less.

And indeed they have a very considerable and substantial reason, to exempt as few as possibly they can from going to purgatory; because the more they put in fear of going thither, the market of indulgences riseth the higher, and the profit thence accruing to the Pope's coffers; and the more and greater legacies will be left to the priests, to hire their saying of masses, for the delivery of souls out of the place of torments: for though the prayers of friends and relations will contribute something to this; yet nothing does the business so effectually, as the masses and prayers of priests, to that end.

But how is it then that St. John says, that those *that die in the Lord are happy*, because *they rest from their labours*, if so be the far greatest part of those who *die in the Lord* are so far from *resting from their labours*, that they enter into far greater pains and torments than ever they endured in this world? And therefore Bellarmine, that their doctrine of purgatory may receive no prejudice from this text, would have *from henceforth* in the text, to be dated from the day of judgment; when he supposeth the pains of purgatory will be at an end. But why *from henceforth* should take date from the day of judgment, he can give no reason, but only to save purgatory from being condemned by this text. For St. John plainly speaks of the happiness of those that should die after that time, whatever it be, which he there describes; but that time cannot be the day of judgment, because none shall die after that time. Just thus Estius, one of their most learned commentators, deals with another text, which by the generality of their writers is urged as a plain proof

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proof of purgatory; *He ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire:* upon which he ſays, "It is ſufficient that there is no-"thing in this text againſt purgatory." Sufficient, for what? Not to prove purgatory, as they generally pretend from this text, but to ſave it harmleſs from it; as if we had pretended that this text makes againſt it.

But there are others that make againſt it with a witneſs. Not only the perpetual ſilence of ſcripture about it, when there are ſo many fair occaſions of ſpeaking of it; as in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, where the future ſtate is ſo particularly deſcribed, and yet no mention made, nor the leaſt intimation given of this third ſtate: but beſides the ſilence of ſcripture about it, there are ſeveral paſſages utterly inconſiſtent with it; as, namely, St. Paul's diſcourſe in the beginning of the 5th chapter of the 2d epiſtle to the Corinthians, where he plainly declares the aſſurance he had, that all ſincere Chriſtians, ſo ſoon as they quit the body, do paſs into happineſs: *For we know* (ſays he) *that if our earthly houſe of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a building of God, a houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* The plain meaning of which is, that ſo ſoon as we quit the one, we ſhall paſs into the other. And this conſideration, he tells us, made Chriſtians weary of this world, and willing to die: ℣ 2. *For in this we grone earneſtly, deſiring to be clothed upon with our houſe, which is from heaven;* and ℣ 4. *For we that are in this tabernacle, do grone, being burdened.* But had Chriſtians believed, that the greateſt part of them, when they left the body, were to go into purgatory, to be terribly tormented there, they would not have been in ſuch haſte to die; but would have protracted the time as long as they could, and have contentedly borne *the burden of this earthly tabernacle*, rather than to quit it, for a condition a thouſand times more intolerable. But St. Paul expreſsly ſays, that Chriſtians knew the contrary; and that as ſoon as ever they went *out of the body*, they ſhould be happy, and *with the Lord*; and that this gave them courage againſt the fears of death: ℣ 6. *Therefore we are always confident,* θαῤῥοῦντες δὲ πάντοτε, Bono igitur animo ſumus; *Therefore we are always of good courage, knowing that whilſt we are at home in the body, we are abſent from the Lord;* and ℣ 8.

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We are of good courage, I ſay, and willing rather to be abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord. The plain ſenſe of which is, that Chriſtians were willing rather to die than to live; becauſe they knew, that ſo ſoon as they left the body, and departed this life, they ſhould be *preſent with the Lord.* But now, if the doctrine of purgatory be true, this whole reaſoning of St. Paul proceeds upon a groſs miſtake; and therefore I am certain it is not true. And ſo does the *voice from heaven* here in the text; *Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord, that they may reſt from their labours:* for there is no reaſon to reſtrain this general expreſſion, *that die in the Lord,* only to the martyrs: for though they are certainly included, and perhaps primarily intended in it; yet this phraſe comprehends all thoſe who die in the faith of Chriſt, and is moſt frequently ſo uſed in the New Teſtament.

But let this ſuffice to have been ſpoken of this matter; eſpecially ſince Biſhop Fiſher, and ſeveral of their own learned writers, do ſo frankly acknowledge, that their doctrine of purgatory hath no ſufficient ground in ſcripture. Other reaſons I grant they have for it, which make them very loth to quit it: it is a very profitable doctrine, and therefore they have taken care to have it more abundantly confirmed, by apparitions of ſouls from the dead, than any other doctrine whatſoever. In ſhort, how little ſoever they can ſay for it, it is in vain to go about to perſuade them to part with it. Demetrius the ſilverſmith argued as well as he could for his goddeſs Diana, from the univerſal conſent of the world in the worſhip of her: *The great goddeſs Diana, whom all Aſia, and the world worſhippeth.* But his truſty argument to his workmen was, *Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth, and this our craft is in danger to be ſet at nought.*

II. Here is a mighty encouragement to piety and virtue, to conſider that all the good we do in this world will accompany us into the other: *Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord; for their works accompany them.*

When we come to die, we can call nothing our own but the good works which by the grace of God we have been enabled to do in this life. Theſe will ſtick by us, and bear us company into the other world, when we ſhall

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ſhall be ſtript of all other things, and forced to part from them, whether we will or no. Our riches and our honours, our ſenſual pleaſures and delights, will all take their leave of us, when we leave this world: nay, many times they do not accompany us ſo far as the grave, but leave us very unkindly and unſeaſonably, when we have the greateſt need and uſe of them.

There is one way indeed whereby we may ſecure our riches, and make ſure friends to ourſelves of them, by laying them out in charity. By this means we may ſend them before us, and conſign them over to another world, to make way for our reception there. So our Lord aſſures us, Luke xii. 33. that by *giving alms* we *provide ourſelves bags which wax not old, a treaſure in the heavens which faileth not*; and Luke xvi. 9. that by this way we may *make to ourſelves friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs; that when we fail, they may receive us into everlaſting habitations. The mammon of unrighteouſneſs*, what is that? It is what the ſcripture elſewhere calls *deceitful riches*; becauſe in other ways, in which men commonly lay them out, they turn to no certain account, but one way or other do deceive and fruſtrate our expectation: by diſpoſing of them in charity, to the relief of the poor and perſecuted, we make ſure friends of them, and conſign the effects of them to our certain benefit and advantage in another world.

And as charity, ſo likewiſe all other graces and virtues are *that good part that cannot be taken away from us.* All the good actions that we do in this life, will go with us to the grave, and bear us company into the other world, and will ſtand by us when we come to appear before our judge, and, through the merits of our bleſſed Saviour, will procure for us, at the hands of a gracious and merciful God, a moſt ample and eternal reward.

And what an encouragement is this to holineſs and virtue, to conſider that it will be all our own another day, and turn to our unſpeakable advantage at our great account! to be aſſured, that whoever ſerves God faithfully, lays up ſo much treaſure for himſelf, which he may take along with him into the other world; and does provide for himſelf laſting comforts and faithful companions, which will never leave him nor forſake him; a happineſs large

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large as his desires, and durable and immortal as his soul!

Let us then *do* all *the good* that possibly we can *whilst we have opportunity.* Let us serve God industriously, and with all our might; knowing that no good action that we do, shall be lost, and fall to the ground; that no grace and virtue that we practise in this life, nor any degree of them, shall lose their reward. If we faithfully improve the talents which are committed to us, to our master's advantage; when he comes to call us to an account, and finds that we have done so, we shall not fail to receive both his approbation and reward. And what a comfort will it be to any one of us, to hear those blessed words from the mouth of our Lord, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a little, I will make thee ruler over much; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!* We shall not need to plead our services to him, and put him in mind of them. Our judge himself will celebrate our good deeds upon the theatre of the world, and commemorate them to our advantage; and interpret every good office we have done to any of his poor and afflicted members, as if it had been a kindness immediately done to himself. So our Lord represents the proceedings of the great Judge and King of the world in the great day of recompence, Matth. xxv. 34.—40. *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee* in any of these circumstances; *hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and ministred unto thee? And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done unto me.* Who would not be ambitious and glad to serve such a prince, who will so benignly interpret, and so bountifully reward the least service we do to him?

III. The consideration of this should likewise be a great argument and support to our patience, under all those

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thoſe evils, and ſufferings, and perſecutions, which many times attend good men in this world. They are for the preſent perhaps very heavy and grievous: but there is a time ſhortly coming, when we ſhall be at eaſe, and perfectly freed from them; when we ſhall find *reſt from our labours* and ſufferings; when we ſhall *enter into peace, and reſt in our beds, every one walking in his uprightneſs*; that is, reaping the comfort, and enjoying the reward of his ſincerity towards God, and conſtant ſuffering for his cauſe and truth. And therefore it was well ſaid of a good man, "Bleſſed be God that we are to die;" becauſe to good men that is a certain remedy of all the evils of this life, and will unqueſtionably put an end to them. The grave is a place of reſt, and diſcharge from all trouble; as Job elegantly deſcribes it, chap. iii. 17. 18. 19. *There the wicked ceaſe from troubling: and there the weary be at reſt. There the priſoners reſt together, they hear not the voice of the oppreſſor. The ſmall and great are there, and the ſervant is free from his maſter.*

So ſoon as we enter into the other world, we are ſecure againſt the purſuit and danger of all thoſe evils which afflicted us in this world; and nothing will remain but the joyful remembrance of our ſufferings, and the plentiful reward of our conſtancy and patience under them. And the more our tribulations and perſecutions have abounded, the greater will our comfort and happineſs then be; *which* (ſaith St. Paul) *is a manifeſt token* (a clear demonſtration) *of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye alſo ſuffer: ſeeing it is a righteous thing with God, to recompenſe to you who are troubled, reſt with us, when the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels*, 2 Theſſ. i. 5. 6. 7.

IV. The conſideration of the extreme ſufferings which are to fall upon the faithful ſervants of Chriſt in the laſt times, and which ſeem now to be begun in the world, ſhould make us very contented to leave this world, and glad of any fair opportunity and excuſe to take our leave of it, and to be out of the reach and danger of thoſe violent and more than human temptations, with which our faith and conſtancy may be aſſailed; nay, to eſteem it a particular grace and favour of God to us,

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us, to be *taken away from the evil to come*, and to prevent, if God ſees it good, thoſe extremities of ſuffering which are coming upon the world.

Theſe ſeem now to be begun in ſome part of it. They in our neighbour nation have a bitter cup put into their hands; *a cup of aſtoniſhment* to all thoſe that hear of it. Whether this be that laſt and extreme perſecution ſpoken of here by St. John, I ſhall not pretend poſitively to determine. It is plainly diſtinguiſhed in the viſions, from that under the firſt beaſt, deſcribed Rev. xiii. from ℣ 1. to ℣ 11.; and chap. xvii. there is a deſcription of *the beaſt upon which the woman ſitteth, on whoſe forehead is a name written*, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT. And this beaſt is there ſaid to *have ſeven heads and ten horns*; which are thus explained by St. John, chap. xvii. 9. 10. *And here is the mind which hath wiſdom. The ſeven heads are ſeven mountains, upon which the woman ſitteth. And there are ſeven kings*; that is, as is generally agreed by interpreters, a ſucceſſion of ſeven governments; and ℣ 12. 13. 14. *And the ten horns which thou ſaweſt, are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beaſt. Theſe have one mind, and ſhall give their power and ſtrength unto the beaſt; and ſhall make war with the Lamb*; and ℣ 18. *And the woman which thou ſaweſt, is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*

So that this beaſt is plainly the Roman empire: and *the woman that ſitteth upon her*, is the *great city* ſtanding upon *ſeven mountains, which reigneth over the kings of the earth*: which can be no other than Rome; as is agreed by interpreters on all ſides. Bellarmine (*l.* 2. *c.* 2. *de Rom. Pontif.*) confeſſeth, that St. John in the Revelations every where calleth Rome Babylon; as Tertullian, ſaith he, hath noted; and as is plain from chap. xvii. where Babylon is ſaid to be *ſeated on ſeven mountains*, and to *have dominion over the kings of the earth*; there being no other city than Rome, which in the time of St. John had *dominion over the kings of the earth*: and that Rome was built upon ſeven hills, is famous. Thus much Bellarmine acknowledgeth, conſtrained by the force of truth; and for another ſmall reaſon, namely, becauſe St. Peter writes his firſt epiſtle from Babylon; by which,

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if Rome be not meant, they have no proof from ſcripture that St. Peter was ever there.

Indeed they of the church of Rome would have it to be only Rome Pagan. But that cannot be; becauſe this beaſt, after his *laſt head was wounded to death*, and *his deadly wound was healed, had power given him to continue two and forty months*, or, as it is elſewhere expreſſed, *twelve hundred and ſixty days*, that is, in the prophetick ſtyle, ſo many years; and likewiſe becauſe it was not to begin till the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire upon its diſſolution was divided, were ſet up, which was not till after the Weſtern empire was overthrown and deſtroyed by the Goths and Vandals; and, laſtly, becauſe this is that Rome or Babylon, which ſhould finally be *deſtroyed*, and *caſt as a milſtone into the bottom of the ſea*, never to riſe again; which is yet to come. And of this beaſt it is ſaid, that he ſhould *make war with the ſaints, and overcome them*, chap. xiii. 7.; that is, that he ſhould raiſe a long and great perſecution againſt them, which ſhould try their faith and patience: ℣ 10. *Here is the patience and the faith of the ſaints. The beaſt* then *with ten horns* muſt be Rome, governing the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire was broken; and this can be nothing elſe but Rome Papal, to which *the ten kings* are ſaid to *give their power*, and to which they were in a moſt ſervile manner ſubject for ſeveral ages; as is plain from hiſtory.

And to confirm this, it is very obſervable, that the ancient fathers generally agree, that *that which hindered the revealing of the wicked one*, ſpoken of by St. Paul, 2 Theſſ. ii. 7. 8. was the Roman empire; and that being removed, *the man of ſin*, or antichriſt, was to ſucceed in its room. I ſhall produce a few teſtimonies to this purpoſe, but very remarkable ones. Tertullian, expounding what St. Paul means by *him that with-holdeth* or *letteth*, hath theſe words: *Quis niſi Romanus ſtatus*, &c. "Who is that but the Roman ſtate, which, being bro-"ken into ten Kings, ſhall bring on antichriſt? *and then* "*the wicked one ſhall be revealed.*" And in his Apology, he gives this reaſon why the Chriſtians ſhould pray for the Roman Emperors, and the whole ſtate of the empire; "becauſe the greateſt miſchief hanging over the "world,

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" world, is hindered by the continuance of it." St. Chryſoſtom ſpeaking of *that which hinders the revelation of the man of ſin:* " This (ſays he) can be no other than " the Roman empire: for as long as that ſtands, he " dares not ſhew himſelf; but upon the vacancy or cea- " ſing of that, he ſhall aſſume to himſelf both the power " of God and man." St. Auſtin, in his book *De civit. Dei,* " No man (ſays he) doubts, but that the ſucceſſor " to the Roman Emperor in Rome ſhall be the man of " ſin;" and we know who hath ſucceeded him.

But now, after this, *another beaſt* is repreſented *coming out of the earth;* not ſucceeding in the place of the firſt beaſt, but appearing during his continuance, ℣ 12.; and he hath theſe remarkable characters by which he may be known.

1. He is ſaid to have but *two horns;* by which (according to the interpretation of *the ten horns,* ſignifying *the ten kingdoms,* into which the Roman empire, after its diſſolution, ſhould be divided) we are in all reaſon to underſtand two of theſe kingdoms, of which this beaſt, whoever he be, ſhall be poſſeſſed.

2. He is ſaid to be *like a lamb,* but to *ſpeak like a dragon;* that is, to pretend and make a ſhew of great lenity and mildneſs in his proceedings, but that really he ſhall be very cruel. It ſhall be pretended, that he does all without violence, and without arms; but he ſhall *ſpeak as a dragon:* that is, in truth ſhall exerciſe great force and cruelty; either alluding to the cruelty of *the dragon,* literally ſo called; or perhaps prophetically, pointing at a particular ſort of armed ſoldiers, called by that name of *dragons*; or, as we, according to the French pronunciation, call them *dragoons.*

3. He ſhall ariſe during the continuance of *the firſt beaſt,* and engage in his cauſe; but *the firſt beaſt* ſhall only ſtand by, and look on: ℣ 12. *And he exerciſeth all the power of the firſt beaſt before him, and cauſeth the earth, and them that dwell therein, to worſhip the beaſt, whoſe deadly wound was healed;* plainly declaring, that this perſecution ſhould not immediately ariſe from *the firſt beaſt,* which is ſaid to *come out of the ſea,* which in this prophecy denotes the ſtate eccleſiaſtical; but from *the ſecond beaſt,* which *comes out of the earth,* and denotes the temporal power. But yet, all this ought to be

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acted in the ſight of *the firſt beaſt*, and in his behalf, to *compel men to worſhip him.*

4. That he ſhall be remarkable for cauſing fire to come down from heaven to earth in a wonderful manner, to the great terror and amazement of men: ℣ 13. *And he doth great wonders; ſo that he maketh fire to come down from heaven on the earth, in the ſight of men.*

5. That he would interdict all thoſe who would *not worſhip the beaſt*, all commerce with human ſociety, the exerciſe of civil trades and profeſſions: ℣ 17. *And he cauſeth, that no man might buy or ſell, ſave he that had the mark of the beaſt.*

6. and laſtly, (which ſeems to be the moſt peculiar and characteriſtical note of all the reſt), That his number ſhould be ſix hundred threeſcore and ſix; that is, (as moſt of the ancients underſtand it), that the numeral letters of a certain word or name ſhould, being computed, amount to that number. And it is expreſsly ſaid to be the *number of a man*, ℣ 18. *Let him that hath underſtanding count the number of the beaſt; for it is the number of a man.* And, in the verſe before, it is ſaid to be *the number of his name.*

Now, to whom all theſe characters do agree, and eſpecially the laſt, concerning *the number of his name*, I ſhall not preſume to conjecture; much leſs poſitively to determine, whether he be now in being; becauſe it is ſaid to require a particular wiſdom and underſtanding to find it out: *Here is wiſdom. Let him that hath underſtanding, count the number of the beaſt.* However, the event, when the thing is fully accompliſhed, will clearly diſcover it. Thus much is certain, that this extreme perſecution, whenever it ſhall be, will forerun the final deſtruction of Babylon, which will not then be far off. And concerning this it is that St. John ſpeaks, chap. xiv. 12. when he ſays, *Here is the patience of the ſaints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jeſus:* and then he immediately adds, as it is in the text, *And I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, Write, Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours; and their works do accompany them.* Thus much may ſuffice to have been ſpoken on this text.

SERMON

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SERMON LXXXI.

The vanity and wickedneſs of honouring dead ſaints, and perſecuting the living.

Preached on All-Saints day.

LUKE xi. 49. 50. 51.

Therefore alſo ſaid the wiſdom of God, I will ſend them prophets and apoſtles, and ſome of them they ſhall ſlay and perſecute: that the blood of all the prophets which was ſhed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which periſhed between the altar and the temple: verily I ſay unto you, It ſhall be required of this generation.

THE latter part of this chapter is a very ſharp, but juſt invective, made by our Saviour againſt the hypocriſy of the ſcribes and Phariſees; of which he gives many inſtances; and this, among the reſt, for one, that they pretended a great honour and reſpect for the righteous men and prophets of former ages, whom their fathers had perſecuted and ſlain; but yet were of the ſame ſpirit and temper, and as ready to perſecute good men as their fathers were. They raiſed indeed ſtately monuments to the memory of thoſe ſaints and martyrs, and adorned them with great art and coſt, and it is likely made a great ſhew of eſteem and veneration for them: but all this while they were of the ſame diſpoſition with their fathers, and bare the ſame implacable hatred and malice againſt the prophets and righteous men who then lived among them, yea againſt that great Prophet whom God had ſent into the world, Jeſus the Son of God, which their fathers did againſt the good men of their times. And though they diſclaimed the wickedneſs and cruelty of their fathers, with never ſo much zeal and vehemency; yet, for all that, they were

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ready to do the same things. Now, this was so gross and odious a piece of hypocrisy in them, that our Saviour doth with great reason denounce so severe a wo against them: *Wo unto you: for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness, that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres:* and then it follows, *Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, to the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple.*

There are considerable difficulties in both these passages. As to the former, *Wo unto you: for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness, that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres;* the force of this reasoning is at first sight not easy to be discerned; and therefore expositors have gone several ways to explain it.

Some comparing this with the parallel places in St. Matthew's gospel, chap. xxiii. 29. will not have our Saviour to mean, that by *building the sepulchres of the prophets* they expressed their approbation of their fathers killing them. They did indeed testify, by their usage of the righteous men that lived amongst themselves, that they were of the very same temper and spirit which their fathers had been of; and that they would have done just as their fathers did, if they had been in the same circumstances with their fathers: so that they *were witnesses to themselves,* (as it is in St. Matthew), *that they were children of them which killed the prophets*; they owned themselves *their children* by descent, and their actions witnessed that they were *their children* also in resemblance; nay, as it is there further intimated, they seemed resolved to *fill up the measure of their fathers:* though all this while they pretended not to approve their fathers behaviour; and therefore, whilst they were *building the tombs of the prophets, and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous, they said, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood*

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blood of the prophets. And the interpreters that go this way, do accordingly render these words of St. Luke, not as they are in our translation, *Ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers;* but, *Ye bear witness, and ye allow* (or *are well pleased with*), *the deeds of your fathers:* that is, Ye own that they were your fathers, who did these things; and though ye do not in words allow what they did, yet your inward tempers and dispositions, whether you know it or no, are the very same with theirs, which you too plainly testify by your actions: so that when *you build the sepulchres of the prophets,* you only expose the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of your hearts, your pretences and your actions directly contradicting each other. Thus some expositors give the sense of this passage.

But others think, that our Saviour intended somewhat more in St. Luke, namely, to retort upon them the honour which they seemed to do to the prophets, in *building their sepulchres,* as an argument that they rejoiced in their death; seeing they were so well content to be at the charge of a monument for them; like Herod, who, when he had murdered Aristobulus, made a magnificent funeral for him; or, as the Roman historians say of Caracalla, though he hated all good men whilst they were alive, yet he would pretend to honour them when they were dead. This some think our Saviour intended in these words, *Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres;* as if he had said, Hereby ye testify, that ye allow and like very well what your fathers did to the Prophets. According to which latter exposition, there seems to be more force and greater sharpness in our Saviour's reproof; as not only charging them with the ill usage of the righteous men of their own times, but moreover making them, by their *building the tombs* and *garnishing the sepulchres* of the ancient prophets, to become as it were accessaries to the murder of them.

But leaving this digression, I now proceed to that which I primarily intended, namely, first, to explain the following words, which I have chosen as my present

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sent subject; and then to make some observations upon them.

Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, to the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

There are three considerable difficulties in the words; which I shall endeavour to explain to you.

1. What is here meant by *the wisdom of God.*

2. Who this Zacharias was, here mentioned by our Saviour: *From the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple.*

3. In what sense, and with what reason and justice it is here threatened, *that the blood of all the prophets and righteous men shed from the foundation of the world, should be required of that generation.*

I. What is here meant by *the wisdom of God: Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles,* &c. In St. Matthew our Saviour speaks this in his own name, *Wherefore behold, I send unto you prophets:* for which reason some think, that, by *the wisdom of God,* our Saviour here designed himself; as if he had said, Therefore *I, who am the wisdom of God,* declare unto you. But this is not very probable, our Saviour no where else in the gospel speaking of himself in any such style; though St. Paul calls him *the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* Others think, that our Saviour here refers to some prophecy of the Old Testament to this purpose: *Therefore the wisdom of God hath said;* that is, the Holy Spirit of wisdom, which inspired the prophets in the Old Testament. But this conceit is utterly without ground; for we find no such passage, nor any thing to that sense, in any of the prophets of the Old Testament.

But the most plain and simple interpretation is this: *Therefore hath the wisdom of God said;* that is, the most wise God hath determined to send among you such messengers and holy men; and I foresee that ye will thus abuse them, and thereby bring wrath and destruction upon

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on yourselves. And whereas our Saviour says in St. Matthew, *Behold, I send unto you prophets;* it is very probable he speaks in God's name; and that it is to be understood, *Behold, says God, I send unto you.* And this phrase of *the wisdom of God*, for *the most wise God*, is very agreeable to other forms of speech which we meet with in the Jewish writers; as, *Dicit norma judicii*, "The rule "of judgment says;" that is, the most just and righteous God: which serves very well to explain the phrase in the text, *Therefore saith the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles.*

By *apostles* is here meant all sorts of divine messengers: for so St. Matthew expresseth it; *I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes;* that is, several holy and excellent men, endued with all sorts of divine gifts; *prophets, and wise men, and scribes*, which were the most glorious and admired titles among the Jews.

And some of them they shall slay and persecute. St. Matthew expresseth it more particularly, *Some of them ye shall kill and crucify*; as it was afterwards fulfilled in the two James's, and Stephen, who were slain by them; and in Simon the Son of Cleophas, and before him in Jesus the Son of God, who were crucified. *And some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues*; as we read they did to Peter and John: and *persecute them from city to city*; as they did Paul and Barnabas. The sending of these messengers of God among the Jews, and this ill usage of them, the all-wise and all-knowing God had determined and foreseen.

II. Who this Zacharias was, here mentioned by our Saviour. And there are so many of them, no less than four of this name, to whom it may with some probability be applied, but especially to two of them, that it is very hard to determine which of them our Saviour means. Three Zacharias's are mentioned in scripture, and one more in the history of Josephus.

There was Zacharias the father of John the Baptist; but whose son he was, we do not read. And though of his death the scripture is silent, yet there are two traditions about it: one, that he was slain by Herod's officers, because he would not tell where his son, John the Baptist, was, when Herod sent for him. But the credit

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of this relies upon very doubtful authors. The other is mentioned by several of the fathers; and the substance of it is briefly this: That there being a place in the temple where the virgins by themselves used to pray, the virgin Mary coming to that place to pray among the virgins, was forbidden, because she had had a child; and that Zacharias, for maintaining her virginity, was set upon, and *killed between the temple and the altar*. But this tradition is rejected by St. Jerome; and I doubt there is little ground for it.

Zacharias, one of the lesser prophets, was the son of Barachias; which agrees so far with St. Matthew's description of him. But there is no mention in scripture that he was slain. Nor could he well be in the temple, which was but building in his time; though the author of the Targum says, that Zacharias the son of Iddo was slain by the Jews in the house of the Lord's sanctuary on the day of the propitiation, because he admonished them not to do evil before the Lord. Now, Zacharias the son of Barachias was the grandson of Iddo. But yet I think this was only lapse of memory, and that he means Zachary in the Chronicles, who was slain by Joash.

And he is the third Zacharias I mentioned, 2 Chron. xxiv. 20. 21. who, as he was reproving the people for *transgressing the commandment of the Lord, was stoned with stones at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord*. And this our Saviour seems more particularly to reflect upon immediately after the text; *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the prophets*, &c. Now this, one would think, was certainly the person intended by our Saviour, and fit to be mentioned with Abel, whose *blood* is said *to have cried to the Lord*. For of Zacharias it is likewise said, that *when he died, he said, The Lord look upon it, and require it*. And Drusius cites a Jewish writer speaking thus, by way of complaint against the Jewish nation: "because in the midst of thee "fell the priests of the Lord, and his prophets; and "because before the holy temple in the midst of thee "was slain the godly and righteous prophet Zacharias, "who lay unburied, nor did the earth cover his blood, "but to this day it goes up, and speaks in the midst of "thee."

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" thee." So that none could have been more fit to have been joined with Abel in this reſpect.

But as probable as this looks, there are two very great objections againſt it. One is, that St. Matthew calls the Zacharias ſpoken of by our Saviour, the ſon of Barachias; whereas this Zacharias ſlain by Joaſh, was the ſon of Jehoiada: and though it be very conſiderable, which St. Jerome obſerves, that in the Hebrew, or Nazarene goſpel, it is Zacharias the ſon of Jehoiada; yet it is hard to rely upon that, againſt all the Greek copies. But a more difficult objection, in my opinion, is, that our Saviour ſeems to deſign to mention the two extremes, the firſt and laſt righteous man that was ſlain, and between them two comprehended the good men of all ages that were perſecuted and ſlain: and if ſo, then that Zacharias in the Chronicles, who was ſlain ſo long before, can by no means be the perſon.

There is yet a fourth Zacharias, mentioned by Joſephus, *lib.* 4. the ſon of Baruch, (which is probably enough the ſame name with Barachias), who was the laſt remarkable good man that was ſlain immediately before the ſiege of Jeruſalem; and that, as Joſephus tells us, in the midſt of the temple: which agrees with our Saviour's deſcription of it, *between the altar and the temple;* not the altar of incenſe, but of burnt-offerings, which was in the outward court, before the aſcent to the temple. So that Grotius thinks this was the man intended by our Saviour, yet ſo, that he does both allude to the hiſtory of the former Zacharias, and foretel the death of this. And there is but one objection againſt this, that our Saviour ſpeaks of this as already paſt, *whom you have ſlain;* whereas this Zacharias was not ſlain till after our Saviour's death. But I think that a ſatisfactory anſwer may be given to this, *viz.* that our Saviour, foretelling thoſe future perſecutions which ſhould fill up the meaſure of their ſins, and bring final deſtruction upon them, he ſpeaks of this as already paſt; becauſe, before that deſtruction ſhould come upon them, it would be true, they *had ſlain him:* ſo that, ſpeaking of the vengeance coming upon them, well might he ſay, *that upon them ſhould come the blood of all the righteous men, from Abel to Zacharias, whom they had ſlain,* &c.

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III. The third difficulty remains; and that is, In what sense, and with what reason and justice it is here threatened, *that the blood of all the prophets and righteous men shed from the foundation of the world, should be required of that generation.* Some understand this more strictly; they should be charged with it, and formally punished for it; because, in imitating their cruel predecessors, they should be guilty of all their cruelty. But there is no necessity of this. All that our Saviour seems to intend is this, that their punishment in the destruction of Jerusalem should be so horrible, as if God had once for all arraigned them of all the righteous blood that ever had been shed in the world, and brought the punishment of it upon them; though in truth the punishment did not exceed the desert of their own sins. And if this be the meaning of it, there is nothing harsh and unreasonable in it. And thus I have explained, as well as I can, the several difficulties in the text. I shall make two or three observations from the main scope and design of it, and so conclude.

1. That it hath been the lot of holy and righteous men, in most ages of the world, to meet with very bad usage, to be *persecuted and slain.* The devil began this work early. When there were but three men in all the world, and two of them brethren, the one slew the other, *because he was more righteous,* and served God better than he did. And this trade hath continued, and been practised, more or less, in most ages and generations of the world; as might be deduced through the history of the Old and New Testament, and of most ages since: though *the rod of the wicked hath not always abode upon the back of the righteous,* lest at last piety should be quite discouraged, and *the faithful fail from among the children of men.* The people and the church of God have had many intervals of peace and prosperity; and sometimes, for a long continuance, the favour and countenance of authority, and the powers of the world, and the laws of nations, on their side.

But yet there is a continual *enmity between the seed of the woman, and the serpent; between the righteous and the wicked; between those that serve God, and those that serve him not;* because their ways are contrary one to another,

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ther, and quite of another fashion; their principles and practices do contradict and clash with one another; the virtues of good men are continually upbraiding of the bad, a living reproof and reproach to them: so that it is no wonder that evil men do so violently hate and persecute the good, and do by all means endeavour to remove out of the way those who are so opposite and offensive to them.

2. We may observe likewise hence, how great a sin they are guilty of, who persecute the righteous, and how terrible a vengeance from God waits on them. Particular examples of this have been in all ages: but as the guilt of this sin never went higher, than at this time foretold by our Saviour, when God sent to the Jews such *prophets, and wise men, and scribes*, and such a number of them as never upon any occasion were sent into the world, and they used them in that bloody and barbarous manner; no wonder, if the vengeance that came upon them was such as never had been before; and if, after they had *filled up the measure* of their sins, by *crucifying the Lord Jesus*, and *persecuting his apostles*, and *stoning and killing* all *the prophets* that were sent unto them, *the wrath of God came upon them to the utmost*, and such a terrible destruction from the Lord, as never befel any people; insomuch that our Saviour, upon the foresight and mention of it, forty years before it happened, could not but *weep over them*, and express himself in those compassionate words, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

3. From this whole passage of our Saviour which I have been explaining to you, we may learn how vain it is for men to pretend to honour the dead saints, when they persecute the living. This was the great hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees among the Jews in our Saviour's time, and is at this day of the rulers and governors of the Roman church among us Christians; nay, they exceed the scribes and Pharisees, not only in their veneration of the ancient saints and righteous men, but also, if it be possible, in their malice and cruelty towards

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the living. For they not only build costly monuments to their memory, which was the utmost the scribes and Pharisees did, but they honour them with shrines and rich offerings, with prayers and vows to them, more frequent than to almighty God himself, and our blessed Saviour. But then they hate and persecute the living, with as great violence and cruelty as ever was used by any part of mankind towards one another. It is true, they do it under the notion of heresy; and so did the scribes and Pharisees too, as St. Paul witnesseth: *After the way which ye call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the law, and in the prophets.* So they call us *hereticks*, though we receive and believe all that is written in the holy scriptures, only rejecting their additions, whereby they would *make the commandment of God of none effect.* And as Rome is parallel with Jerusalem in many other respects, so especially in the bloody persecution of righteous men: and as Jerusalem is charged by our Saviour with *the blood of all the prophets and righteous men* of all ages, so St. John in the Revelation says of Rome, that *in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth,* chap. xviii. 24.; which is no less true of Rome Christian, than of Rome Pagan. In all the churches and religions in the world, and perhaps in Rome Pagan herself, hath not so much innocent blood been shed, as in Rome Christian and Catholick, and that under a pretence of religion: and no doubt there is a day coming, when she shall be called to a heavy account for these things, when *the heavens shall rejoice over her, and the holy angels and prophets, because God hath avenged them on her.*

SERMON

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SERMON LXXXII.

The danger of zeal without knowledge.

Preached Nov. 5. 1682.

ROM. X. 2.

I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

THere is nothing more commonly cried up than zeal in religion; and yet there is nothing in which men do more frequently and fatally miſtake and miſcarry, and in the expreſſions and effects whereof men ought to govern themſelves with more care and caution. To ſpeak the truth, zeal is, as all other paſſions are, in its own nature indifferent, and of itſelf neither good nor bad, but according to the object and degree of it: for zeal is nothing elſe, but an earneſt concernment for or againſt ſomething, and a violent purſuit and proſecution of it. For if it be applied to a right object, ſo as we be earneſtly concerned for things that are unqueſtionably good, and againſt things that are unqueſtionably evil, and in a due degree; that is, if the expreſſion of it be proportionable to the leſs or greater good or evil of things; then it is a commendable quality or virtue: but if it be wrong placed, and we be earneſtly concerned for that which is evil, and againſt that which is good, or about things which are of an indifferent or doubtful nature, as to the good and evil of them; or if we notoriouſly exceed in the degree of it, being more zealouſly concerned about things than they deſerve, and zealouſly concerned about leſſer things, to the prejudice of greater; in any of theſe caſes, it is ſo far from being a virtue, that it is a vice of a moſt pernicious and miſchievous conſequence, and many times hath as bad effects as can proceed from the worſt principle or diſpoſition of mind.

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It is sometimes used in a good sense: but it is when it is applied to the best things, in which the honour of God, and the salvation of men is concerned; to the great and unquestionable duties of religion: As, zeal for the honour of God, and the place of his publick worship, in opposition to profaneness, John ii. 17. *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up:* for an earnest desire of those gifts whereby we are to edify the church, 1 Cor. xii. 31. *But covet earnestly the best gifts,* so we render the words; *Be zealous of the best gifts,* so it is in the Greek: for a forwardness and readiness to relieve the necessities of the saints, 2 Cor. ix. 2. *I know the forwardness of your minds; and your zeal hath provoked very many;* and to the same purpose is that expression, Tit. ii. 14. *zealous of good works:* and then for a zeal for the salvation of mens souls, 2 Cor. xi. 2. *I am zealous of you with a godly zeal.*

But the word is much more frequently in scripture used in a bad sense, for a malicious and furious rage against the professors of Christianity: Acts v. 17. 18. *Then the high priest, and they that were with him, were filled with indignation,* (the word is *zeal*); *and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in prison;* and chap. xiii. 45. it is said, *The Jews were filled with zeal, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming;* and chap. xvii. 5. *The Jews which believed not, moved with zeal, gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar.*

It is frequently reckoned amongst *the works of the flesh,* and mentioned in the company of the greatest vices and crimes; wrath, contention, division, sedition, murders, tumults, confusions: Rom. xiii. 13. *Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and zeal.* 1 Cor. iii. 3. *Whereas there is among you zeal, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?* 2 Cor. xii. 20. *Lest there be debates, zeal, wraths, strifes.* Gal. v. 19. 20. 21. *The works of the flesh are manifest;* among which the Apostle reckons *hatred, variance, zeal, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders.* St. James calls it a *bitter zeal,* James iii. 14. 15. 16. *But if ye have bitter zeal and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above;*

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above; but is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh. For where zeal and ſtrife is, there is confuſion and every evil work. By which it appears, that *zeal* moſt frequently goes under a bad name and character in ſcripture; *zeal*, I mean, in matters of religion; for of that moſt of the texts I have mentioned ſpeak: and this is that which St. Paul means here in the text by *a zeal of God;* that is, a zeal about religion, and divine things: *I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

In which words, the Apoſtle being deſirous to ſay the beſt he could of his countrymen the Jews, he commends the good meaning of their zeal, and blames the ill conduct of it: *I bear them record,* μαρτυρῶ αὐτοῖς, *I give this teſtimony on their behalf, that they have a zeal of God;* that is, that by all this fierceneſs againſt the Chriſtian religion, they intend the honour of God, and think they do him ſervice: but yet this zeal is greatly to be condemned; becauſe it is a miſtaken and miſguided zeal, not at all directed as it ſhould be: *They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

From which words I ſhall take into conſideration theſe three things.

1. What are the qualifications and properties of *a zeal according to knowledge.*

2. By what marks and characters we may know that zeal which here, and elſewhere in ſcripture, is condemned, as *not* being *according to knowledge.*

3. How far the doing of any thing out of *a zeal for God,* doth mitigate and extenuate the evil of it. For when the Apoſtle here teſtifies concerning the Jews, that they had *a zeal for God,* he ſpeaks this in favour of them, and by way of mitigation of their faults. When I have handled theſe three particulars, I ſhall apply my diſcourſe to the preſent occaſion of this day.

I. What are the qualifications and properties of *a zeal according to knowledge.* I ſhall mention theſe three.

1. That our zeal be right, in reſpect of its object.

2. That the meaſure and degree of it be proportioned to the good or evil of things, about which it is converſant.

3. That we purſue it by lawful ways and means.

1. That our zeal be right, in reſpect of its object; I

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mean, that those things which we are zealous for, be certainly and considerably good; and that those things which we are zealous against, be certainly and considerably evil. A mistake in any of these, quite mars our zeal, and spoils the virtue of it: and though it be never so much intended for God, it is not at all pleasing and acceptable to him; because it is a blind, and ignorant, and mistaken zeal: and the hotter, the worse; it is not an heavenly fire, that comes down from above; but it is like the fire of hell, heat without light. If we mistake good and evil, and be zealously concerned against that which is good, or for that which is evil, the greater our zeal is, the greater is our fault; and instead of doing God and religion service and credit, we do the greatest mischief and dishonour we can to them both. Or if the thing about which our zeal is conversant, be of a doubtful uncertain nature; this is not properly an object of zeal. Men should never be earnest for or against any thing, but upon clear and certain grounds, that what we contend so earnestly for, is undoubtedly good; and that which we are so violent against, is undoubtedly evil: if it be not, we are zealous for we know not what; and that I am sure is *a zeal not according to knowledge*.

And if the thing be certainly good or evil, which we are so concerned about, it must also be considerably so; otherwise it will not warrant our being zealous about it. All truth is good, and all error bad; but there are many truths so inconsiderable, and which have so small an influence upon practice, that they do not deserve our zeal and earnest contention about them: and so likewise are there many errors and mistakes, of so slight and inconsiderable a nature, that it were better men should be let alone in them, than provoked to quarrel and contend about them.

Thus that great heat that was in the Christian church about the time of observing Easter, was, in my opinion, *a zeal not according to knowledge*. They were on both sides agreed in the main, which was, to celebrate the memory of our Saviour's resurrection: but there were different customs about the time; which was a matter of no such consideration, as to deserve so much heat and zeal about it, especially considering the uncharitable and mischievous consequences of that difference.

2. That

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2. That our zeal may be *according to knowledge*, the measure and degree of it must be proportioned to the good or evil of things, about which it is conversant. That is an ignorant zeal, which is conversant about lesser things, and unconcerned for greater. Such was the zeal of the scribes and Pharisees, who were mightily concerned about external and lesser matters; but took little or no care of inward purity, and real and substantial goodness. They were very careful *not to eat with unwashed hands, and to make clean the outside of the cup and platter*; but then *they were full of extortion, and all unrighteousness: they paid tythe of mint, and anise, and cummin; but omitted the weightier things, judgment, mercy, and fidelity*; or, as St. Luke expresseth it, *they past over judgment, and the love of God.*

A zealous strictness about external rites, and matters of difference, where there is a visible neglect of the substantial duties of religion, and the great virtues of a good life, is either a gross ignorance of the true nature of religion, or a fulsome hypocrisy. And so likewise is a loud and zealous outery against rites and ceremonies, and the imposition of indifferent things in religion, when men can release themselves from the obligation of natural and moral duties, and *pass over mercy, and justice, and charity.*

3. *A zeal* that is *according to knowledge*, must be pursued and prosecuted by lawful and warrantable means. No zeal for God and his glory, for his true church and religion, will justify the doing of that which is morally and in itself evil: *Will ye speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him?* We do not know what belongs to the honour of God and religion, if we think to promote his glory, by means so dishonourable and offensive to him. The Apostle pronounceth it a damnable sin, for any to charge this doctrine upon Christianity, that evil may be done for a good end, and to promote the glory of God, Rom. iii. 8. *As we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, Let us do evil, that good may come; whose damnation is just.*

And yet nothing is more frequent, than for men, out of *a zeal for God* and religion, to overlook the evil and unlawfulness of the means they use for the advancing so good an end. This is that which hath sanctified those

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refined arts of lying and perjury, by equivocation and mental reservation; those seditious ways of disturbing the peace of kingdoms, by treason and rebellion, by excommunicating and deposing of princes, upon pretence of heresy; of extirpating those whom they please to call hereticks, by inquisitions, and croisadoes, and massacres: and this, not only in the opinion of private persons, but in the judgment of Popes, and of general councils. I proceed, in the

II. Second place, to shew by what marks and characters we may know the contrary zeal, that which is *not according to knowledge*; which is condemned here in the text, and very frequently in other places of scripture. And though this may be sufficiently known by the contrary marks and properties, which I shall but briefly mention; yet, to discover it more fully, I shall add one or two more very gross and sensible signs and instances of it.

1. It is *a zeal without knowledge*, that is mistaken in the proper object of it, that calls good evil, and evil good; a zeal for gross errors and superstitions, plainly contrary either to the revelation of God's word, or the light of reason, or to common sense: any or all of these cannot be *a zeal according to knowledge*. A zeal for the worship of images, for praying to saints and angels, contrary to the plain law and word of God; a zeal for the sacrilegious depriving of the people of half the sacrament, contrary to our Saviour's plain institution, and the acknowledged practice of the catholick church for a thousand years; a zeal for that most absurd of all doctrines that ever was taught in any religion, I mean the doctrine of transubstantiation, not only without any sufficient authority from scripture, as is acknowledged by several of the most learned of the Roman church, but contrary to reason, and in defiance of the sense of all mankind: a zeal for these, and many more like gross errors and practices, cannot possibly be *a zeal according to knowledge*.

2. That is *a zeal without knowledge*, the degree whereof is manifestly disproportioned to the good or evil of things about which it is conversant. When there is in men a greater and fiercer zeal for the externals of religion,

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gion, than for the vital and essential parts of it; for the traditions of men, than for the commandments of God; for bodily severities, than for the mortification of our lusts; for the means of religion, than for the end of it: a greater zeal against the omission and neglect of some senseless and superstitious practices, than against the practice of the grossest immoralities; and against the deniers of the doctrines of transubstantiation, and the Pope's infallibility, an equal, if not a greater zeal, (I am sure a more severe prosecution), than against those who deny our Saviour to be the true Messias, and the Son of God: this certainly is not *a zeal according to knowledge.* Nor,

3. That which is prosecuted by unlawful and unwarrantable means. That cannot be *a zeal of God according to knowledge*, which warrants *the doing of evil, that good may come*; the violating of truth and faith, and of the peace of human society, for the cause of the catholick church; and breaking the eternal and immutable laws of God, for the advancing of his glory. Nor,

4. An uncharitable zeal, which is an enemy to peace, and order, and thinks itself sufficiently warranted to separate from the communion of Christians, and to break the peace of the church upon every scruple, and upon every fancy and conceit of unlawful impositions, though in the most indifferent things; nay, upon this single point, because a thing which they acknowledge lawful, and indifferent in itself, is in the worship of God injoined by authority; the most unreasonable principle that I think ever was avowed among Christians: not to do a thing which otherwise they might do, only because it is injoined; and to fancy that an indifferent thing becomes presently unlawful, because it is commanded by lawful authority; and that it is a sin to do any thing in the worship of God, which is not left to their liberty, whether they will do it or not. This is not only *a zeal without knowledge*, but contrary to common sense. Nor,

5. A furious and cruel zeal, which St. James calls *a bitter*, or *a wrathful zeal*, and which tends to *confusion and every evil work*; which is blind with its own rage, and makes men, as St. Paul says of himself, when he persecuted the Christians, *exceedingly mad* against all that differ

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differ from them, and ſtand in the way of their fierce and outrageous zeal.

6. and laſtly, A zeal for ignorance is moſt certainly *not a zeal according to knowledge*. And this is a zeal peculiar to the church of Rome, by ſuch ſtrict laws to forbid people the uſe of the holy ſcriptures in a known tongue; nay, not ſo much as to allow them to underſtand what they do in the ſervice of God; to require them to be preſent at their publick prayers, and to join with them in them, without letting them know the meaning of them; to pretend to teach them, by reading leſſons to them in an unknown tongue: and all this under pretence of increaſing their devotion; as if the leſs men underſtand of the ſervice of God, the more they would be affected with it, and edified by it.

And yet there is nothing in which the church of Rome hath been more zealouſly concerned, than to keep the people in ignorance. Nothing they have oppoſed with more obſtinacy, againſt the repeated application of princes and people, at the beginning of the reformation, than to allow the people the uſe of the ſcriptures, and their publick prayers, in a known tongue. And their obſtinacy in this point was not without reaſon; nothing being more certain, than that if the people were once brought to underſtand the ſcriptures, they would ſoon quit their religion, which in ſo many things is ſo directly contrary to the word of God. The

III. Third and laſt thing remains to be ſpoken to, *viz.* How far the doing of things out of *a zeal for God*, doth mitigate and extenuate the evil of them? For when the Apoſtle here teſtifies concerning the Jews, that they had *a zeal of God*, he ſpeaks this in favour of them, and by way of mitigation of their fault. *I bear them record*; I who was once acted by this ignorant and furious zeal which now poſſeſſeth them, and perſecuted the Chriſtians in the ſame outrageous manner as they ſtill continue to do, and all this with a very good conſcience, as I thought, and out of *a zeal for God*, and the true religion. So he tells us, Acts xxvi. 9. *I verily thought with myſelf, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jeſus of Nazareth*. So that his zeal was ſincere, and with a real intention to do ſervice to God and religion; and yet, for

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for all that, was very faulty and sinful; and, if he had persisted in it, damnable: so that his confidence that he was in the right, and the sincerity of his zeal in acting according to the persuasion of his conscience, did not alter the nature of the actions he did out of this zeal, and make them less wicked in themselves; though it was some mitigation of the fault of the person, and rendered him more capable of the mercy of God by repentance, than if he had done contrary to his conscience, and the clear convictions of his own mind.

And therefore the best way to understand the great evil and wickedness of this furious and blind zeal, will be, to consider the account which St. Paul, after his conversion, gives of his own doings, and what load he lays upon himself, notwithstanding the sincerity of his zeal, and that he had acted according to his conscience. Acts viii. and ix. you have the history at large of his outrageous doings, how he *made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women to prison; how he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.* Acts xxii. 4. *I persecuted* (says he) *this way unto the death, binding and delivering unto prisons both men and women;* and chap. xxvi. 10. 11. *Many of the saints did I shut up in prison; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them: and I punished them often in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.* Gal. i. 13. 14. *Ye have heard* (says he) *of my conversation in times past, in the Jews religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it; being exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.* 1 Tim. i. 13. *Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.* So that he chargeth himself with the guilt of blasphemy and murder, and a most furious and outrageous persecution of good men; for which elsewhere he pronounceth himself *the chief of sinners.* From whence it evidently appears, that men may do the most wicked and damnable sins out of *a zeal for God.*

And this was the case of many of the Jews, as our Saviour foretold, that *the time should come, when they should kill men, thinking they did God good service.* But yet, for

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for all this, the Apostles of our Lord make no scruple to charge them with downright murder: Acts ii. 23. speaking of their putting our Saviour to death, *Whom ye by wicked hands have crucified and slain*; and Acts vii. 52. *The just one, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.*

Yet notwithstanding their sin was of this high nature in itself, it was some mitigation of the fault of the persons, that they did these things out of an ignorant zeal, and rendered them more capable of the mercy of God upon their repentance. And upon this account our Saviour interceeded with God for mercy for them: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* St. Peter also pleads the same in mitigation of their fault, Acts iii. 17. *And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.* And St. Paul tells us, that he *found mercy*, upon his repentance, on this account: 1 Tim. i. 13. *But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief.* But still, for all this, wicked things done out of conscience, and zeal for God, are damnable, and will prove so, without repentance.

I shall now draw some inferences from this discourse by way of application.

1. If it be so necessary, that our zeal be directed by knowledge, this shews us how dangerous a thing zeal is in the weak and ignorant sort of people. Zeal is an edge-tool, which children in understanding should not meddle withal; and yet it most frequently possesseth the weakest minds: and commonly by how much the less knowing people are, by so much the more zealous they are. And in the church of Rome, where knowledge is professedly discouraged and suppressed in the common people, zeal is mightily countenanced and cherished: and they make great use of it; for this blind and furious zeal is that which inspires them to do such cruel and barbarous things, as were hardly ever acted among the Heathen. Zeal is only fit for wise men; but it is chiefly in fashion among fools.

Nay, it is dangerous in the hands of wise men, and to be governed and kept in with a strict rein; otherwise it will transport them to the doing of undue and irregular things. Moses, one of the wisest and best of men, and most

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moſt likely to govern and manage his zeal as he ought, and to keep aloof from all exceſs and extravagance, being *the meekeſt man upon earth*; yet he was ſo ſurpriſed, upon a ſudden occaſion, that, in a fit of zeal, he let fall the two tables of the law, which he had but juſt received from God, and daſhed them in pieces: A true emblem of an ungoverned zeal; in the tranſport whereof even good men are apt to forget the laws of God, and let them fall out of their hands, and to break all the obligations of natural and moral duties.

2. From hence we plainly ſee, that men may do the worſt and wickedeſt things out of *a zeal for God* and religion. Thus it was among the Jews, who ingroſſed ſalvation to themſelves, and denied the poſſibility of it to all the world beſides; and the church of Rome have taken copy by them, as in an arrogant conceit of themſelves, ſo in the blindneſs, and fury, and uncharitableneſs of their zeal towards all who refuſe to ſubmit to their authority and directions.

And as the teachers and rulers of the Jewiſh church did of old, ſo doth the church of Rome now: They *take away the key of knowledge from the people, and will neither enter into the kingdom of heaven themſelves, nor ſuffer thoſe that would, to enter in.* They brand for hereticks thoſe who make the holy ſcriptures the rule of their faith and worſhip; as St. Paul tells us the Jews did in his time, Acts xxiv. 14. *After the way which they call hereſy, ſo worſhip I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets.* They eſtabliſh the merit of their own righteouſneſs, not ſubmitting to the righteouſneſs of God, by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt. So St. Paul tells us the Jews did, in the verſe immediately after the text: *For they being ignorant of God's righteouſneſs, and going about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, have not ſubmitted themſelves to the righteouſneſs of God.* And as the Jews anathematized and excommunicated the firſt Chriſtians, and perſecuted them to the death, as our Saviour foretold, *that the time would come when they ſhould put them out of their ſynagogues, yea, and kill them, thinking they did God good ſervice*; ſo the church of Rome hath, for many ages, uſed the ſincere profeſſors of the ſame religion; perſecuting them, firſt with ex-

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communication, and then with fire and faggot; and, with all the violence and fury in the world, endeavouring the utter extirpation and ruin of them, by bloody croisadoes and a barbarous inquisition, by treacherous massacres, and all sorts of hellish plots and machinations. Witness the monstrous design of this day, never to be remembered or mentioned without horror, to have destroyed at one blow, and have swallowed up in one common ruin, our King, and Prince, and Nobles, and the representative body of the whole nation. Witness the bloody massacre of Ireland, and all their wicked designs and practices continued to this very day.

3. and lastly, That *zeal for God* and religion does not alter the nature of actions done upon that account. Persecution and murder of the sincere professors of religion, are damnable sins; and no *zeal for God* and religion can excuse them, or take away the guilt of them. *Zeal for God* will justify no action that we do, unless there be discretion to justify our zeal.

There is nothing oftener misleads men, than a misguided zeal. It is an *ignis fatuus*, "a false fire," which often leads men into bogs and precipices. It appears in the night, in dark and ignorant weak minds, and offers itself a guide to those who have lost their way. It is one of the most ungovernable passions of human nature; and therefore requires great knowledge and judgment to manage it, and keep it within bounds. It is, like fire, a good servant, but a bad master: if it once get head, it consumes and devours all before it. And the great danger and mischief of it is, that it is most commonly found where it should not be, and possesses those most who are least fit to govern it, and most frequently employed about what it should not be; and ten to one but it is either mistaken in the object, or in the measure and degree of it: and even when it is a virtue, it is a nice and dangerous one; for the wisest men are apt to mingle their own passions and interests with their zeal for God and religion. So that it is not enough that men are acted by a zeal for God, and do sincerely follow the dictates of their consciences; but they must be careful to inform their consciences, and not suffer themselves to be violently transported, and hurried on by their own passions

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passions and prejudice, and by a blind and furious zeal without knowledge.

But what then? Would we have men not follow their own consciences, or act contrary to them? No; by no means: for though conscience be not our rule, yet it is our immediate guide; and he does ill who does act against his conscience. But men must be careful how they settle their practical judgment of things, and conclude things to be lawful or unlawful, duties or sins, without reason and good ground.

God hath given us understandings to try and examine things, and the light of his word to direct us in this trial; and if we will judge rashly, and suffer ourselves to be hurried by prejudice or passion, the errors of our judgment become faults of our lives: for God expects from us that we should weigh and consider what we do: and when he hath afforded us light enough to discern between good and evil, that we should carefully follow the direction of it; that we should be suspicious of ourselves, when our zeal carries us to do things that are furious and cruel, false and treacherous, and have a horrid appearance even to the light of nature: we should question that zeal which is so contrary to Christian goodness and meekness, to peace and charity, and which tends to *confusion and every evil work.*

I will conclude all with that excellent passage of St. James, which will shew us how little regard is to be had to many mens pretences of zeal for religion, chap. iii. 13.—18. *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among st you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter zeal and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above; but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where zeal and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated; full of mercy, and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.*

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SERMON LXXXIII.

The beſt men liable to the worſt treatment from miſtaken zealots.

Preached on Nov. 5. 1686.

JOHN xvi. 2.

They ſhall put you out of the ſynagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you, will think that he doth God ſervice.

THeſe words were ſpoken by our bleſſed Saviour when he was about to leave the world; at the thoughts whereof, finding his diſciples to be exceedingly troubled, he comforts them by the conſideration of the great benefit and advantage which from thence would accrue to them. He tells them, that he was going to heaven to interceed for them, and to make way for their admiſſion there; and withal promiſeth, that his Father would ſend the Holy Ghoſt, who ſhould abundantly ſupply the want of his preſence with them. But he tells them, at the ſame time, that they ſhould meet with very ill entertainment and uſage from the world. But ſo had he: chap. xv. 18. *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you;* and why ſhould they expect to be better treated than he was? ℣ 20. *Remember the word that I ſaid unto you, The ſervant is not greater than the lord. If they have perſecuted me, they will alſo perſecute you.*

And at the beginning of this chapter, he tells them, that he did on purpoſe forewarn them of theſe things, to prepare their minds beforehand, and to arm them againſt the worſt that might happen: ℣ 1. *Theſe things have I ſpoken unto you, that ye ſhould not be offended.* And then he declares more particularly how far the rage and malice of men ſhould proceed againſt them, and in what kind they ſhould ſuffer: *They ſhall put you out of the ſynagogues:*

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ſynagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you, will think that he doth God ſervice.

So that our Saviour here foretels two ſorts of perſecution which his diſciples ſhould be exerciſed withal; excommunication, *They ſhall put you out of the ſynagogues*; and exciſion, *Yea, the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you, will think that he doth God ſervice.* And theſe perhaps were but ſeveral kinds and degrees of excommunication. For the clearer underſtanding whereof, it will be requiſite briefly to explain the three degrees of excommunication among the Jews.

The firſt, called *Niddui*, is that which our Saviour here means by *putting out of the ſynagogue*; and which he elſewhere expreſſeth by ἀφόρισμος, or *ſeparation*, Luke vi. 22. *Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall hate you, and when they ſhall ſeparate you from their company.* And the effect of this excommunication was, to exclude men from the communion of the church and people of God, and from his ſervice: which was a great diſgrace; becauſe, after this ſentence, none of the Jews were to converſe with them, but to look upon them *as Heathens and publicans.*

The ſecond degree of this cenſure was called *Cherem*, which included the firſt, but extended farther, to the confiſcation of goods into the ſacred treaſury, and devoting them to God; after which there was no redemption of them. And of this we find expreſs mention, Ezra x. 7. 8. where it is ſaid, that *they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jeruſalem, unto all the children of the captivity, that they ſhould gather themſelves together unto Jeruſalem; and that whoſoever would not come within three days, according to the counſel of the princes and elders, all his ſubſtance ſhould be devoted, and himſelf ſeparated from the congregation of thoſe that had been carried away.*

The third degree was *Shammatha*, when the rebellious and contumacious perſon was anathematized and devoted; and, as ſome conceive, according to the law, Lev. xxvii. 29. was to be put to death: though other very knowing men in the Jewiſh learning think it amounted to no more than a final ſentence, whereby they were left to the judgment of God, by ſome remarkable judgment of his to be cut off from the congregation of Iſrael.

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Of the firſt and laſt of theſe degrees of excommunication our Saviour ſeems here to ſpeak; but whether in both inſtances in the text he alludes in the one to the loweſt, and in the other to the higheſt degree of excommunication among the Jews, is not ſo certain. To the firſt he plainly does, when he ſays, *They ſhall put you out of the ſynagogues;* and then he adds, that they ſhould proceed much higher againſt them, even to put them to death: *The time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you, will think that he doth God ſervice;* that is, they ſhould not only think it lawful to kill them, but look upon it as a duty, as a high act of religion, as an acceptable piece of worſhip, and *a ſacrifice well-pleaſing to God.* For ſo indeed the word does not only import, but moſt properly ſignify, *Whoſoever killeth you, ſhall think* λατρειαν προσφέρειν τῷ Θεῷ, *that he offers a ſacrifice to God;* for ſo the word λατρεία is ſometimes uſed, for *a ſacrifice;* but being joined with προσφέρειν, ſeems neceſſarily to be determined to that ſenſe.

From the words thus explained, I ſhall make theſe following obſervations, very proper for our conſideration upon the occaſion of this day.

1. That the beſt of men may be ſeparated and excluded from the communion of thoſe who may aſſume to themſelves to be the true, and the only true church; yea, and ſuffer under the notion of very bad and criminal perſons. This our Saviour here foretold of his Apoſtles, ſome of the beſt men that ever lived: *They ſhall put you out of the ſynagogues.*

2. That they who are thus excommunicated by the pretended true church, may nevertheleſs be real members of the true church of Chriſt. Though the Apoſtles were thus dealt withal by the Jewiſh church, they did not ceaſe for all that to be members of the true church of God.

3. That from uncharitable cenſures men do eaſily and almoſt naturally proceed to cruel actions. After they had *put* the diſciples of our Lord *out of their ſynagogues,* and thereby concluded them to be hereticks and reprobates, they preſently proceed to kill them, as not worthy to live: *They ſhall put you out of their ſynagogues;* and when they have done that, they will ſoon after think it a thing not only fit, but pious and meritorious, to put

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put you to death: *The time will come, that they will think it a good ſervice to God to kill you.*

4. That men may do the vileſt things, and the moſt wicked, not only under a grave pretence of religion, but out of a real opinion and perſuaſion that they do religiouſly. Murder is certainly one of the greateſt and moſt crying ſins; and yet our Saviour foretels, that the Jews ſhould put his diſciples to death, being verily perſuaded, that in ſo doing they offered a moſt acceptable ſacrifice to God: *Yea, the time ſhall come, that whoſoever killeth you, ſhall think that he offers a ſacrifice to God.*

5. That ſuch actions are never the leſs horribly impious and wicked, notwithſtanding the good mind with which, and the good end for which they are done. The Jews were not excuſed from the guilt of perſecution and murder, for all they thought they did well in killing the diſciples of our Lord.

6. I obſerve, that the corruption of the beſt things is the worſt. Religion is the higheſt accompliſhment and perfection of human nature; and zeal for God and his truth an excellent quality, and highly acceptable to God: and yet nothing is more barbarous, and ſpurs men on to more horrible impieties, than a blind zeal for God, and falſe and miſtaken principles in the matter of religion; as is plain from the inſtances here before us in the text. I ſhall ſpeak as briefly as I can to theſe obſervations.

I. That the beſt of men may be ſeparated and excluded from the communion of thoſe who may aſſume to be the true, and only true church, and that under the notion of very bad and criminal perſons. This our Saviour foretels in the text ſhould be the fate of his Apoſtles, ſome of the beſt and holieſt perſons that ever lived: *They ſhall put you out of the ſynagogues.*

And what the Jews did in the beginning of Chriſtianity to the Apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour, hath been too frequently practiſed ſince by ſome of the profeſſors of Chriſtianity towards one another; and very good men have in ſeveral ages fallen under the cenſure of excommunication, and have been ſeparated from the external communion of the church, and branded with the odious

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dious names of *hereticks* and *apoſtates*, by thoſe who have arrogated to themſelves to be the only orthodox and true church, and have gotten the external power and management of religion into their hands. Witneſs the caſe of Athanaſius, and others, in the reign and prevalency of Arianiſm; and the ill treatment, that not only particular perſons, eminent for their learning and piety, but whole churches, have met with in this kind, from that haughty and uncharitable church, which makes nothing of thundering out this moſt fearful ſentence of excommunication againſt perſons and churches much better and more Chriſtian than herſelf, and againſt all that will not ſubmit to her pretended infallibility, and uſurped authority over the ſouls and conſciences of men.

But it is our great comfort, that the Apoſtles and diſciples of our Lord and Maſter were thus uſed, by a church that made the ſame pretences that they do, and upon grounds every whit as plauſible; as I could clearly ſhew, if I were minded to purſue and make out this compariſon.

II. They who are thus excommunicated by the only pretended true church, may nevertheleſs be true members of the church of Chriſt. Though the Apoſtles were thus dealt withal by the Jewiſh church, they did not ceaſe for all this to be real members of the true church of God. For it is not calling hereticks firſt, that proves them that do ſo to be no hereticks, or acquits them from the ſame or greater crimes, than thoſe which they are ſo forward to charge upon other men: nor will God condemn all thoſe who are excommunicated by men, and deny ſalvation to every one whom they ſhall pleaſe to ſeparate from their ſociety, and to call by ſome odious name. Men may be put out of the ſynagogue, and yet received into heaven; for *the judgment of God is* not according to the uncharitable cenſures of men, but *according to truth* and right.

The ſentence of excommunication is certainly very dreadful where it is duly inflicted: and, next to the judgment of God, men ought to be afraid of juſtly incurring the danger of this cenſure. And it ought to be upon very plain and evident grounds, that men either ſepa-

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rate themſelves, or endanger their being cut off from the communion of the church they live in. But when it once comes to this, that a church is infected with groſs errors and corruptions, plainly contrary to the word of God, eſpecially if that church will impoſe her errors upon all that are of her communion; then thoſe who refuſe to comply, do not ſeparate themſelves, but are cut off; do not depart, but are driven out of the communion of that church: and ſeparation in that caſe is as innocent and free from the guilt of ſchiſm, as the cauſe of it is; for the terms of communion are become ſuch, that thoſe who are convinced of thoſe errors and corruptions, can have no ſalvation, if they continue in that communion: and then I am ſure their ſalvation will not be endangered by leaving it, or being excommunicated out of it; for that would be the hardeſt caſe in the world, that men ſhould be damned for continuing in the communion of ſuch a church, and damned likewiſe for being caſt out of it.

Therefore no man ought to be terrified becauſe of the boldneſs and preſumption of thoſe who, with ſo much confidence, and ſo little charity, damn all that are not of their communion: for we ſee plainly from the text, that men may be in the right and ſureſt way to ſalvation, and yet be excommunicated by thoſe who call themſelves the true church, and will not allow ſalvation to any but thoſe of their own communion. The diſciples of our Lord and Saviour were certainly very good men, and in a ſafe way of ſalvation, though they were excommunicated, and put out of the ſynagogue, by the chief prieſts and the rulers of the Jewiſh church. I proceed to the

III. Third obſervation; which was this, That from uncharitable cenſures men do, by an eaſy ſtep, and almoſt naturally, proceed to cruel actions. After the Jews had put the diſciples of our Lord out of their ſynagogues, and thereby concluded them to be hereticks and reprobates, no wonder they ſhould proceed to kill thoſe whom they thought not worthy to live: *They ſhall put you out of their ſynagogues*, ſays our Saviour; and when they have done that, they will ſoon think it a thing not only fit and reaſonable, but pious and meritorious, and a good piece of ſervice done to God, to put you to death.

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death. Uncharitableneſs naturally draws on cruelty, and hardens human nature towards thoſe of whom we have once conceived ſo ill an opinion, that they are enemies to God and his truth.

And this hath been the ſource of the moſt barbarous cruelties that have been in the world: witneſs the ſeverity of the Heathen perſecution of the Chriſtians; which juſtified itſelf by the uncharitable opinion which they had conceived of them, that they were deſpiſers of religion and the gods, and conſequently Atheiſts; that they were pertinacious and obſtinate in their opinions; that is, in the modern ſtyle, they were hereticks. And the like uncharitable conceit among Chriſtians hath been thought a ſufficient ground, even in the judgment of the infallible chair, for the juſtification of ſeveral bloody maſſacres, and the cruel proceedings of the inquiſition againſt perſons ſuſpected of hereſy; for after men are once ſentenced to eternal damnation, it ſeems a ſmall thing to torment and deſtroy their bodies.

IV. Men may do the vileſt and moſt wicked things, not only under a grave pretence of religion, but out of a real opinion and perſuaſion of mind, that they do religiouſly. Murder is certainly one of the greateſt and moſt crying ſins; and yet our Saviour foretels, that the Jews ſhould put his diſciples to death, being verily perſuaded, that in ſo doing they ſhould offer a moſt acceptable ſacrifice to God: *Yea, the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you, ſhall think that he offers a ſacrifice to God.*

Not but that the great duties and virtues of religion are very plain, and eaſy to be underſtood; and ſo are the contrary ſins and vices: but then they are only plain to a teachable, and honeſt, and well-diſpoſed mind; to thoſe *who receive the word with meekneſs*, and are not blinded with wrath and furious zeal; to thoſe that *receive the truth into an honeſt heart*, and *entertain it in the love of it*: they are plain to the humble and meek; for *the humble God will guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his ways*: ſuch as theſe God ſeldom ſuffers to fall into fatal miſtakes about their ſin, or duty, ſo as to *call good evil, and evil good*; to *call light darkneſs, and darkneſs light*; to think uncharitableneſs a virtue, and downright murder a great duty.

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But if men will give up themſelves to be ſwayed by ſelf-love and ſelf-conceit, to be governed by any baſe or corrupt intereſt, to be blinded by prejudice and intoxicated by pride, to be tranſported and hurried away by violent and furious paſſions; no wonder if they miſtake the nature, and confound the differences of things, in the plaineſt and moſt palpable caſes; no wonder if *God give up* perſons of ſuch corrupt minds *to ſtrong deluſions, to believe lies.* It ought not to be ſtrange to us, if ſuch men bring their underſtandings to their wills and intereſts, and bend their judgments to their prejudices, make them to ſtoop to their pride, and blindly to follow their paſſions, which way ſoever they lead them: for God uſually leaves ſuch perſons to themſelves, as run away from him; and is not concerned to ſecure thoſe from ſplitting upon the moſt dangerous rocks, who will ſteer their courſe by no compaſs, but commit themſelves to the wind and tide of their own luſts and paſſions.

In theſe caſes men may take the wrong way, and yet believe themſelves to be in the right: they may oppoſe the truth, and perſecute the profeſſors of it, and be guilty of the blackeſt crimes and the moſt horrid impieties, malice and hatred, blaſphemy and murder; and yet all the while be verily perſuaded, that they are ſerving God, and ſacrificing to him.

Of this we have a plain and full inſtance in the ſcribes and Phariſees, the chief prieſts and rulers among the Jews, who, becauſe they *ſought the honour of men, and not that which was from God,* and *loved the praiſe of men, more than the praiſe of God*; becauſe they were prejudiced againſt the meanneſs of our Saviour's birth and condition, and had upon falſe grounds, though, as they thought, upon the infallibility of tradition, and of ſcripture interpreted by tradition, entertained quite other notions of the Meſſias, from what he really was to be; becauſe they were proud, and thought themſelves too wiſe to learn of him; and becauſe his doctrine of humility and ſelf-denial did thwart their intereſt, and bring down their authority and credit among the people; therefore they ſet themſelves againſt him with all their might, oppoſing his doctrine, and blaſting his reputation, and perſecuting him to death; and all this while did bear up themſelves

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themſelves with a conceit of the antiquity and privileges of their church, and their profound knowledge in the law of God, and a great external ſhew of piety and devotion, and an arrogant pretence and uſurpation of being the only church and people of God in the world: and, by virtue of theſe advantages, they thought they might do any thing; and that whoſoever oppoſed the authority of ſo ancient and good a church, muſt needs be very bad men, and deſerve to be proceeded againſt in the ſevereſt manner; as if any pretence of piety could give a privilege to do wickedly, and by how much the wiſer and holier any man took himſelf to be, he might do ſo much the worſe things.

There is another remarkable inſtance of this in St. Paul, who, out of a blind and furious zeal for *the traditions of his fathers*, perſecuted the true church of God, by impriſonment or death, and all manner of cruelties; and all this while he *verily thought* that he was in the right, and *that he ought to do* all theſe *things againſt the name of Jeſus of Nazareth*. And if God had not in a miraculous manner checked him in his courſe, and changed his mind, he would have ſpent his whole life in that courſe of perſecution and cruelty; and would, with Pope Paul IV. upon his deathbed, have recommended the inquiſition, or if he could have thought of any thing more ſevere, to the chief prieſts and rulers of the Jewiſh church.

I will not trouble you with nearer inſtances; though the Jewiſh church is not the only church in the world, that hath countenanced the deſtruction and extirpation of thoſe who differ from them, as a piece of very acceptable ſervice to God, and meritorious of the pardon of their ſins.

V. I obſerve, that ſuch actions as theſe are never the leſs horribly wicked and impious, notwithſtanding the good mind with which, and the good end for which they are done. The Jews were not excuſed from the guilt of perſecution and murder, for all they thought they did well in killing the diſciples of our Lord.

For to make an action good, and acceptable to God, the goodneſs of all cauſes and of all circumſtances muſt concur; and any one defect in any of theſe, does vitiate the whole action, and ſpoil the goodneſs of it. We muſt

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do it with a good mind, being verily perſuaded, that what we do is good, and acceptable to God; in which ſenſe St. Paul ſaith, that *whatever is not of faith, is ſin:* and we muſt do it for a good end, for the honour of God, and the ſervice of religion, and the benefit and edification of men. But there is one thing wanting yet, which is often forgotten, but is mainly conſiderable, *viz.* what we do with a good mind, and to a good end, muſt be good and lawful in itſelf, commanded or allowed, or at leaſt not forbidden by God: if it be, what good circumſtances ſoever may belong to the action, the whole action is ſtark naught; becauſe the very matter and ſubſtance of it is evil, and unlawful, and damnable, though done for never ſo good an end. So St. Paul tells us, that they *who ſaid they might do evil, that good might come, their damnation was juſt.* He tells us indeed, that ſome would have charged this doctrine upon the Chriſtians, and particularly upon himſelf; but he rejects it with the greateſt deteſtation; and (which is not unworthy of our obſervation) in his epiſtle to the Roman church; as if the ſpirit of God, to whom all times are preſent, had particularly directed him to give this caution to that church, that in future ages they might be warned againſt ſo pernicious a principle, and all wicked practices that are conſequent upon it.

And we find, that St. Paul, after his converſion, did think it no ſufficient plea and excuſe for himſelf, and his perſecution of the Chriſtian profeſſion, that what he did was out of zeal for God, and his true religion, as he was verily perſuaded; but, notwithſtanding that, acknowledgeth himſelf a murderer, and one of the greateſt of ſinners; for which, without the great mercy of God, he had periſhed everlaſtingly.

VI. and laſtly, I obſerve, that the corruption of the beſt things is the worſt. Religion is certainly the higheſt accompliſhment and perfection of human nature; and zeal for God and his truth an excellent quality, and highly acceptable to God: and yet nothing is more barbarous, and ſpurs men on to more horrid impieties, than a blind zeal for God, and falſe and miſtaken principles in the matter of religion.

Our Saviour compares the Chriſtian religion, and the

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miniſters and profeſſors of it, to ſalt and light, the moſt uſeful and delightful things in the world. Religion enlightens the minds of men, and directs them in the way wherein they ſhould go; it ſeaſons the ſpirits and manners of men, and preſerves them from being putrified and corrupted: but *if the ſalt have loſt its ſavour;* if that which ſhould ſeaſon other things, be tainted itſelf; *it is thenceforth* the moſt inſipid and offenſive thing in the world, *good for nothing, but to be caſt upon the dunghill. If the light that is in us be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs?*

Miſtakes and falſe principles are no where ſo pernicious, and of ſuch miſchievous conſequence, as in religion. A blind and miſguided zeal in religion is enough to ſpoil the beſt nature and diſpoſition in the world. St. Paul, for ought appears, was of himſelf of a very kind and compaſſionate nature; and yet what a fury did his miſtaken zeal make him! It is hardly credible how madly he laid about him, but that he himſelf gives us the account of it, Acts xxvi. 9. 10. 11. *I verily thought with myſelf* (ſays he) *that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jeſus of Nazareth. Which thing I alſo did in Jeruſalem: and many of the ſaints did I ſhut up in priſon, having received authority from the chief prieſts; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice againſt them. And I puniſhed them oft in every ſynagogue, and compelled them to blaſpheme; and being exceedingly mad againſt them, I perſecuted them even unto ſtrange cities.*

I might deſcend lower, and give inſtances both of former and latter times, of Emperors and Princes, both Heathen and Chriſtian, that of themſelves were mild and gentle; and yet, through a miſtaken zeal, and the inſtigation of their chief prieſts, have been carried to cruel and bloody things. And indeed nothing gives ſo keen an edge even to the mildeſt tempers, as an erroneous and wild zeal for God and religion: it is like quickſilver in the back of a ſword that is not very ſharp of itſelf, which gives a mighty force and weight to its blow, and makes it to cut terribly.

And it is very ſad to conſider, that the zealous proſecution of miſtakes in religion hath produced ſadder and more barbarous effects in the world, and more frequently,

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quently, than the ordinary corruptions and degeneracy of natural light is apt to do; as the decay of the richeſt and moſt generous wines makes the ſoureſt vinegar. So that the paſquil or libel againſt Pope Urban VIII. upon occaſion of his taking off the brazen roof of the old capitol, which had held out ſo many ages, and that notwithſtanding Rome had been ſo often ſacked by barbarous nations, and his ſelling it to enrich his family, *Quod non fecerant Barbari, fecerunt Barberini*, may, with changing the name and occaſion, be applied to a great many others; that they have been guilty of thoſe cruelties againſt Chriſtians, upon account of difference in religion, which the moſt barbarous nations never exerciſed upon one another.

I have done with the obſervations and the text. And ſhall I now need to make any application of what hath been ſaid, to the occaſion of this day? The thing applies itſelf; ſince the horrid deſign of this day was undertaken and carried on upon the ſame pretences and principles upon which the Jews perſecuted the diſciples of our Lord, and much in the ſame method; for they firſt thundered out an excommunication againſt them, and then took it for granted, that it would be an acceptable ſacrifice to God, to deſtroy them.

I will not go about to aggravate the conſpiracy of this day, it is paſt my ſkill; nor will I extend the blame and guilt of it any farther than the plain evidence and reaſon of the thing does inforce. It is a thing ſo ſcandalous to human nature, and ſo great a reflexion upon any church and religion, to be acceſſory to the contriving or countenancing of any ſuch deſign, that I am very well contented, that it ſhould be confined to as narrow a compaſs as may be, and none eſteemed guilty of it, but thoſe that were openly in it, or have ſince endeavoured to excuſe it. All that we deſire of others, is, that they would declare their hearty deteſtation of ſuch abominable practices, and be as good as their word; and that they would not account it a ſervice and ſacrifice to God, to deſtroy all that cannot be of their mind.

So that the inference from all this diſcourſe, in ſhort, ſhall be this, that men ſhould take great care to inform

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their conſciences aright, and to govern them by the plain rules of good and evil, the law of God written upon our hearts, and revealed in his word; which forbids ſuch practices as I have been ſpeaking of, as clearly as the ſun ſhines at noon-day; and that we would always be afraid to do a bad thing, though gilded over with never ſo glorious colours and ſpecious pretences of zeal for God and his truth. For a man may do a thing with an honeſt mind, and for a religious end, and be commiſſioned and countenanced, as St. Paul was, by them who take themſelves to be the only true church in the world; and yet at laſt prove to have been all the while a blaſphemer, and a murderer, and the greateſt of ſinners; for none of theſe pretences are ſufficient to warrant and ſanctify a wicked action. Before this can be done, the immutable nature of good and evil muſt be changed.

I will conclude all with that gentle reproof of our bleſſed Saviour to his diſciples, when their zeal for him had tranſported them to make that cruel requeſt to him, that he would, as Elias had done upon a like occaſion, *call for fire from heaven to deſtroy the Samaritans: Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of; for the Son of man came not to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them;* hereby declaring to us the true temper and ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and that they that act contrary to it, are ignorant of the nature of the Chriſtian religion: *Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of; for the Son of man came not to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them.*

SERMON

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SERMON LXXXIV.

The duty and reason of praying for governors.

Preached on the 29th of May 1693.

1 TIM. ii. 1. 2.

I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

I Need not tell any here, that this day is appointed by authority for an anniversary solemnity, in a grateful commemoration of the great mercy of God to these nations, in putting an end to the intestine wars and confusions of many years, in restoring to us our ancient government and laws, and in bringing home, as upon this day, the rightful heir of these kingdoms, to the crown and throne of his fathers. And though the glory of this day hath been not a little sullied and obscured by many things which have happened since that time, fitter now to be buried in silence and oblivion than to be mentioned and raked up; yet it hath pleased God, in scattering those black clouds, which not long since hung over us, to restore this day to its first lustre and brightness: so that we may now with great joy look back upon it, as designed by the wise providence of God, to make way for the happiness which we now enjoy under their present Majesties; by whom, under God, we have been delivered from that terrible and imminent danger which threatened our religion and laws, and the very constitution itself of our ancient government. And to this occasion, no kind of argument can be more proper and suitable, than that which the text affords to our consideration, in this injunction of St. Paul to Timothy, to

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take care, that, in the publick worship of God, *supplications* and *thanksgivings* be put up to God, *for kings, and for all that are in authority. I exhort therefore,* &c.

In which words there are four things considerable.

First, The duty here injoined; which is, prayer; expressed to us in several words which seem to denote the several kinds or parts of prayer: *I exhort therefore, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority,* &c. Some of these words are of a very near signification; and yet there seems some difference betwixt them, most probably this.

1. By δεήσεις, which we render *supplications,* is probably meant that part or kind of prayer wherein we supplicate God for the pardon of our sins, and for the averting and removing of evils, whether temporal or spiritual, from ourselves or others.

2. By προσευχὰς which we render *prayers,* seems to be meant petitions for blessings and good things from God; and these are most properly called *prayers.*

3. By ἐντεύξεις seems to be particularly meant *pleadings* and *intercessions* on the behalf of others.

4. By εὐχαριστίας is certainly intended *praises* and *thanksgivings* to God, for his blessings and goodness to ourselves and others. This seems to be the difference between them; which, whether it be exactly so or not, is not very material, since these are unquestionably the several kinds or parts of prayer. All these several sorts of prayer St. Chrysostom, in his comment upon this text, tells us were publickly used in his time in the daily service of the church. "This (says he) all communi-"cants do know is done every day, morning and e-"vening; how that we pray for all the world, *for kings,* "*and for all that are in authority.*"

Secondly, For whom we are to pray; in general, *for all men.* Our prayers are one of the greatest and best expressions of our charity, and therefore ought to be as large and extensive as our charity is. We are bound in common charity to love all men, and to wish well to them; but our bare wishes signify nothing, unless we direct them to God, who is able to confer upon them the blessings and good things which we wish to them.

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And this is a charity which God hath put into every man's power, and which the poorest man in the world, as well as the richest, is capable of exercising at all times, and upon all occasions: for *the ear of God is open to the prayers* of the poor, as well as of the rich, and they are every whit as prevalent with him; nay, the scripture seems to say, that God hath a more particular regard to the prayers of the poor. So that we may be liberal and bountiful in our prayers to those to whom we are able to give nothing else; and when our hands cannot reach to relieve them, we may pour out our hearts to God for them; we may pray for their spiritual and temporal good, and we may praise God for the good which befals them, though it was out of our power to be any ways instrumental to procure it for them.

Thirdly, For whom we are more especially, and in the first place, to pray, *viz.* for those who have the greatest and most publick influence of all others upon the peace and happiness of mankind; *for kings, and for all that are in authority;* that is, for the supreme magistrate, and for all inferior magistrates, who derive their power and authority from the supreme.

Government is necessary to the welfare of mankind; because it is the great band of human society, the guard of its peace, and the security of every man's person and property: and therefore we are concerned, as much as is possible, both to pray for our governors, and to bless God for them; because without them we should be in a most wretched condition. Mankind would be unavoidably miserable without government; human society would presently disband, and all things would run into confusion. It is a remarkable saying of one of the Jewish masters, "Pray for the happiness of the kingdom or "government; for if it were not for the fear of that, "men would devour one another alive." And Josephus tells us, that "when the Jews were made subject "to the Romans, [though it was by conquest], twice "a-day they offered up sacrifices for the life and safety "of the Emperor." And this was very agreeable to what God had commanded that people by his Prophet, in a much like case, when the Jews were conquered by the King of Babylon, and carried away captives, Jer. xxix.

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xxix. 7. *Seek the peace of the city, whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.* And surely the reason is much stronger why we should pray for our natural princes and governors. I come now to the

Fourth and last thing considered in the text, and which I principally design to speak to; namely, the reason or argument which the Apostle uses to engage us to pray for our princes, and *for all that are in authority: That we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* The manifold benefits and advantages which redound to us from our governors, is a sufficient argument why we should pray to God for them, and praise him likewise for so great a blessing, and that in the first place: *I exhort therefore first of all,* (saith the Apostle), *&c.* Now, the Apostle here in the text expresseth two great advantages of government, which upon the matter do comprehend all the rest.

1. That by government we are secured in our civil rights and interests, in the quiet and peaceable possession of what is our own.

2. That we may thereby be protected in the free practice and exercise of religion and virtue.

These are the two greatest and most desirable things to man; and neither of these can be had without government. I shall briefly consider these two particulars, and then endeavour to shew, what obligation the consideration of them lays upon us, both to pray to God in the behalf of our princes and governors, and likewise to praise God for them. And then I shall conclude all with a brief application of this whole discourse to the solemn occasion of this day.

I. I shall begin with the benefits and advantages of government mentioned in the text, namely, these two.

1. That by it we are secured in our civil rights and interests, in the quiet and peaceable possession of what is our own.

Without government there could be no such thing as property in any thing beyond our own persons; for nothing but laws can make property, and laws are the effect of government and authority. nay, without government,

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ment, we have no ſecurity of our perſons and lives, much leſs of any thing that belongs to us, and is at preſent in our poſſeſſion. Were we not protected by laws, which are the effect of government, we could have no ſafety, no quiet enjoyment of any thing; but every man muſt be perpetually upon his guard againſt all the world, and expoſed to continual violence and injuries from thoſe who are too many and too ſtrong for him: ſo that all our quiet and ſecurity from fear and danger, from the fraud and oppreſſion of thoſe who are more crafty and powerful than ourſelves, from endleſs confuſions and diſtractions, and from a ſtate of perpetual feud and war with all mankind, is entirely due and owing to civil government.

And this alone is ſo unſpeakable a benefit, that without it, men, of all creatures, would be the moſt miſerable; becauſe all that wit and ſagacity, all that cunning and contrivance, which mankind hath above the brute creatures, would but enable them to do ſo much the more miſchief to one another, and to deviſe and find out more powerful and effectual means and inſtruments to harm and deſtroy one another.

In ſhort, that we live, and that we live well, in any tolerable condition either of ſafety or plenty, and that we are able to call any thing our own for one day, or for one hour; that we are not in perpetual terror and apprehenſion of mortal dangers, and that we are at any time free from the invaſion of what we at preſent poſſeſs, by the fraud and force of others, is ſolely the effect of this great bleſſing and divine appointment of government, to preſerve the peace of human ſociety, and, by wiſe and wholſome laws, to tie up mens hands from mutual injuries and violence. Upon this all the comfort and all the ſecurity of human laws does depend. From hence it comes to paſs, that, as the ſcripture expreſſeth it, *we may ſit down every man under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree, and that there ſhall be none to make us afraid.* So that if ſecurity is neceſſary to the comfort and happineſs of mankind, then government is ſo too: for without this the ſocieties of men would preſently diſſolve, and fall in pieces, and all things would run into confuſion and diſorder.

2. Another

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2. Another great benefit which may reaſonably be expected from government, (though it does not always ſo happen), is, that men are protected by it in the free exerciſe and practice of religion and virtue. Therefore we ſhould *pray for kings, and for all that are in authority*, (ſays the Apoſtle), *that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty*; that is, in the practice of piety and devotion towards God, of ſobriety and temperance in regard to ourſelves, and of juſtice and charity toward all men.

It is true indeed, and ſo the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians found it by experience, that the edge and authority of laws may be, and ſometimes is turned upon the true religion, and the ſincere profeſſors of it: but even then, though good men may receive great harms and injuries from perſecuting princes and governors, (as the primitive Chriſtians did from ſeveral of the Roman Emperors); yet then it ſo happens, that good men have ſome conſiderable benefit and protection from the civil government and laws, being for the moſt part preſerved from the fury and rage of the multitude: ſo that, though particular perſons undergo the trial of cruel ſufferings, yet much greater numbers do eſcape, and are preſerved.

And, which is very conſiderable in this matter, againſt ſeveral of the main and eſſential parts of religion there never was any human law made: as againſt inward love, honour, and reverence of almighty God, and the worſhipping him in our hearts, and in ſecret; of this part of religion human laws can take no cogniſance: nay farther yet, againſt humility and meekneſs, againſt modeſty and patience, againſt temperance and chaſtity, againſt peaceableneſs, and obedience to government, againſt juſtice and gratitude, againſt charity and forgiveneſs of injuries; *againſt theſe*, and ſuch like virtues, the Apoſtle has told us, *there is no law*. Againſt the practice of theſe, without ſome of which government could not poſſibly ſubſiſt, no perſecution was ever raiſed, no not by the worſt of governors: on the contrary, in the practice of theſe virtues, good men have been in all ages and times protected by law.

It is true indeed, that good men have many times been grievouſly perſecuted by the civil government and authority,

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authority, for the external profession of revealed religion; which was the case of the Christians at that time, when the Apostle commanded them to *pray for kings, and for all that were in authority; that,* under their protection, *they might lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.* St. Paul knew very well, when he gave this injunction to them, *that supplications and prayers be made for kings, and for all that are in authority,* that the powers of the world did not at that time favour Christianity: but he knew likewise, that government was necessary to the happiness of mankind; and that Christians, even in the state of persecution, did enjoy many considerable benefits and advantages by it; so that they were not perpetually exposed to popular rage and cruelty, and the violence of *wicked and unreasonable men;* which would not only have hindered the progress of Christianity, but would in a short time have endangered the extinguishing of it. Besides that, by the favour and protection of government, the Christians had many considerable intervals of peace and ease, which gave Christianity a breathing-time, and opportunity to recover itself: and though the secular authority did for a long time discountenance Christianity, and keep it under hatches, that was but an accidental effect and abuse of government; and obedience was still due, and prayers for it so much the more necessary, yea and thanksgivings to God for it very reasonable, upon account of the common benefits and advantages of it to human society.

Besides that Christians did hope and believe, that the civil government might in time be gained, to give its countenance and assistance to Christianity; and that *kings and princes might become nursing fathers to the church;* as was expressly foretold by the prophets, and afterwards in God's due time was remarkably accomplished. In the mean time, Christians were patiently to obey and suffer, in expectation of those glorious rewards in another world, which were promised to their faith and patience; and to pray for the powers that persecuted them, that *they* also *might be brought to the acknowledgment of the truth,* and might use that power which God had committed to them, for the protection of truth and innocency,

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cy, and for the continuance and support of the true religion; which, blessed be God, was afterwards the case of Christianity for several ages. I proceed, in the

II. Second place, to shew what obligation the consideration of the mighty benefits and advantages of government lays upon us, both to pray to God on the behalf of princes amd governors, and likewise to praise God for them.

Because in their welfare and prosperity the publick peace and happiness doth chiefly consist; and in the publick good consists the good of particular persons. And, above all, the piety and goodness of princes and magistrates, especially those who are in the highest place of authority, have a general good influence upon the manners of men, both for the discountenancing of wickedness and vice, and for the encouragement of religion and virtue, which are the main pillars and foundation of publick peace and prosperity: *A king sitting in the throne of judgment*, (saith Solomon, Prov. xx. 8.), *scattereth away all evil with his eyes*. The pattern of a religious and good prince is a living law to his subjects, and more than the example of ten thousand others, to mould and fashion the manners of the people to a conformity to it.

Besides that there is, as one expresseth, a kind of moral connexion and communication of evil and of guilt betwixt princes and people, so that they are many times mutually rewarded for the virtues and good actions, and punished for the sins and faults of one another. Of which proceedings of the divine justice towards the people of Israel, there are many remarkable instances in scripture, where God rewarded the piety of good princes with great blessings upon their people, and punished the personal faults of their Kings with publick judgments upon the whole nation. So that in truth it is the greatest kindness and charity to ourselves, to pray for our princes and governors; because our welfare is involved in theirs, and we suffer not only in all the misfortunes and calamities which befal them, but many times upon account of their personal faults and miscarriages. *Quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi*: "The extravagancies of princes are punished in the misfortunes of "their subjects." Thus David, otherwise a very good King,

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King, sinned in numbering the people, and the plague fell upon them; he was punished in the calamity of his people. And this was in no ways unjust; because there are always sins enough in any nation to deserve punishment, and God may take what occasion he pleases to send his judgments upon them that deserve them: for princes and people make but one civil and political body; and what part of it soever is punished, the other suffers. And this is the true ground and reason of the communication of punishments betwixt princes and people.

Another consideration which should engage us to *pray for those that are in authority*, is, that we reap the great benefit of their care, and pains, and vigilancy for us. Under their shadow we are safe. Our innocency and our rights are protected by their power and laws, and by the just punishments which they inflict upon evil-doers, and upon those who go about to violate our rights in any kind: so that we ought to pray and to praise God for them, as our great benefactors, and the chief instruments of our security and welfare; and therefore, not only in duty, but in justice and gratitude, we are bound to wish all good to them, and to interceed with God for them, for the peace and prosperity of their government, and to bless God on their behalf: yea, we ought to do this out of love to ourselves; because their good and prosperity is ours; their goodness and righteousness, their personal piety and virtues, extend to us, and have a mighty influence upon us, to excite and encourage us to follow their good example, and to *go and do likewise*.

And we ought likewise to do this out of charity and compassion to our princes and governors, whose condition is in truth rather to be pitied than envied, and whose high place and dignity is much more to be dreaded than desired by a wise man; considering how heavy a burden they sustain, what dangers they are continually exposed to, what cares, and troubles, and censures they daily undergo, for our safety and ease. So that whatever ambitious and inconsiderate men may think, wise men do certainly know and find by experience, that to discharge with care and faithfulness all the parts of a good governor, is a very difficult and troublesome province. Inferior magistrates find care and trouble enough in that

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ſmall ſhare and part of it which they ſuſtain: and if ſo, then certainly the care and concernment of the whole muſt needs be a heavy burden indeed; and what abilities are ſufficient for it, what ſhoulders are ſtrong enough to ſtand under it?

And as upon this account they have the greateſt need of our prayers, for God's direction and aſſiſtance in the diſcharge of their high office; ſo likewiſe for his powerful grace, to preſerve them from ſin and evil, in the midſt of thoſe manifold temptations to which they are continually expoſed, in appearance much beyond other men; from the height of their condition, and the extent of their power, which are ſtrong temptations to weak minds, to pride and inſolency, to injuſtice and oppreſſion; from the abundance of all things which miniſter to luxury and exceſs; and from the officious ſervility of paraſites and flatterers, who ſooth them in their faults, and humour them in their paſſions, and comply with their corrupt and vitious inclinations, and are always ready at hand, and forward inſtruments to execute their commands, and to ſerve their luſts and vices.

And as princes greatly need our prayers upon theſe accounts; ſo it is juſt matter of praiſe and thankfulneſs to God, when a nation hath wiſe, juſt, and good princes, who lay to heart the intereſts of their people, and endeavour, by all the wiſe methods and honeſt arts of government, effectually to procure it; who, by their authority, and due execution of the law, do diſcountenance, and, as much as in them lies, reſtrain wickedneſs and vice; and by their own example encourage virtue and piety in their ſubjects; and thereby invite, and even provoke them to the like practices. The life of a good prince is a kind of publick cenſure of ill manners, and reproof of wicked practices. And I do not know whether there be a more delightful ſight on this ſide heaven, than to ſee thoſe who are in eminent place and power, even if they might do whatever they would, yet continually chuſing to do what they ought; as if their power were ſo far from being a temptation to them to do evil, that, on the contrary, the conſideration of it is one of the beſt and ſtrongeſt arguments to reſtrain them from it.

Weak minds are apt to meaſure their liberty by their power,

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power, and to think, that the higher and greater they are, so much the greater privilege they have to be more extravagantly bad than others: but if the matter be really considered, the argument runs the other way; and he that reasons wisely, will certainly conclude, with Tully, *in maxima quaque fortuna minimum licere;* "that they "who are in the highest station and greatest power, have "of all others the least liberty to do what they list." Their power, supposing it never so uncontroulable and unaccountable, would be so far from being in reason a temptation to them to do what they ought not, that in truth it would set them above the temptation of doing an ill thing; because they would stand in awe of no body, and there would be nothing that could hinder them from doing what is best, if they had a mind to it: and every one ought to have such a mind; and nothing can be more misbecoming, and more directly contrary to the nature of their office, and the power wherewith they are intrusted, than to give an example of breaking those laws which they are to see put in execution.

God himself, because he hath all power, is therefore all goodness; and is therefore *holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works*; according to the reasoning of the author of the book of Wisdom, who argues thus with God: *It is not* (says he, chap. xii. 15. 16.) *agreeable with thy power to condemn him that hath not deserved to be punished;* that is, it is not agreeable with infinite power, to do any thing that is unjust. *For thy power* (saith he to God) *is the beginning of righteousness, and because thou art the Lord of all, it maketh thee to be gracious unto all.* Infinite power is the foundation and principle of goodness and righteousness; and an all-powerful being is good and righteous, not only from choice, but from a necessity of nature.

And this is the true ground and reason of that saying of St. James, that *God cannot be tempted with evil;* because his infinite power sets him above all temptation to it: for what reason can be imagined, why he that hath all power, shall have any inclination to be otherwise than good? What can tempt him thereto? since he that hath all power, can neither have any hopes of being greater than he is, nor any fear of becoming less: and all tem-

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ptation is founded either in hope or fear; and where neither of theſe can have any place, there can be no occaſion, no poſſible motive or temptation to evil: for to be evil, and to do evil, is always an effect of weakneſs, and want of power.

The ſum of what I have ſaid upon this argument, and the deſign indeed of it, is, to ſhew, that the greater power and authority any one hath, the leſs liberty he hath to do any thing that is bad. And I have been the larger upon this, becauſe I would fain imprint upon the minds of perſons whom the providence of God hath inveſted with great power and authority, that as they have great opportunities of doing more good than others, ſo they have greater reaſon and more advantages of doing it; and are more inexcuſable if they do any thing that is bad; not only becauſe their actions are of a more publick influence and obſervation; but becauſe their temptations to evil, how great ſoever they may ſeem to be, are in truth and reality much leſs than other mens. Happy are thoſe princes, that wiſely conſider this, and make their power and authority over others, an argument to be ſo much better themſelves, and to do ſo much more good to others; and becauſe they are leſs ſubject to the coercive power of law, do for that reaſon think themſelves ſo much the more obliged to be *a law to themſelves*. Bleſſed be God for the happineſs which we enjoy in this reſpect; and let us earneſtly beſeech him, that he would be pleaſed to beſtow ſuch a plentiful meaſure of his grace and Holy Spirit on our moſt gracious King and Queen, as may effectually both engage and enable them to uſe their power to the beſt purpoſes for the publick good.

And thus I have briefly gone over and explained to you the ſeveral particulars in the text; the duty of prayer here injoined; for whom we are to pray, in general, *for all men*; and for whom more eſpecially, and *in the firſt place*; *for kings, and all that are in authority*; and upon what conſiderations we are to pray for them, and to praiſe God in their behalf; becauſe of the great benefits we receive by them; and becauſe, both in reſpect of the dangers and difficulties of their condition, they ſtand in need of our prayers above other men; beſides that

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in praying for their welfare and prosperity, we pray for our own peace and happiness.

And now to apply this to ourselves, and to the occasion of this day: By all that hath been said, we cannot but be convinced what cause we have to bless God for that happy government which we live under, that excellent constitution, under the gentle influences whereof we enjoy more liberty, more plenty, and more security from all manner of injury and oppression, than any nation this day on the face of the earth. Therefore with what thankfulness should we this day commemorate the happy restoration of this government to us, after the miserable distractions and confusions of twenty years, by the restoration and return of our banished sovereign, in so peaceable, and yet so wonderful a manner, that a remembrance of it, even at this distance, is almost still matter of amazement to us!

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who alone doth wondrous things.

And, with our joyful praises, let us join our most devout and fervent prayers to almighty God, for the King's and Queen's Majesties, and *for all that are in authority*. And I may truly say, that there was hardly ever greater reason and occasion for it, from both our distractions at home, and our dangers from abroad; never was there greater need of our earnest supplications and prayers, than at this time, when our armies and fleets are in motion, and when God seems already to have given us some earnest of good success. Blessed be his great and glorious name.

We have indeed a great army, and a more powerful fleet than ever this nation sent forth: but unless God be on our side, and favour our cause, in vain are all our preparations; for whenever his providence is pleased to interpose, *by strength shall no man prevail*. Have we not reason then to cry mightily unto God, when the only strength of the nation is at stake; when our sins and provocations are so many and great, and there lies so heavy a load of guilt upon us; when the person of his Sacred Majesty is exposed to so much hazard, not only *in the high places of the field*, but from the restless attempts of the malicious and implacable ene-

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mies of our peace and religion; that he would be graciouſly pleaſed to *go forth with our armies* and fleets, and *not remember our iniquities againſt us, but ſave us for his mercies ſake?*

We are too apt to murmur and complain of miſcarriages, and the ill management of affairs: but ſurely the beſt thing we can do, and that which beſt becomes us, is, to look forward, and to turn our cenſures of our governors and their actions, into humble ſupplications to God in their behalf, and in behalf of the whole nation; that he would be pleaſed to *turn us every one from the evil of our ways*; that *he may return to us, and have mercy on us, that ſo iniquity may not be our ruin*; that *he may rejoice over us to do us good*, and may at laſt *think thoughts of peace towards us, thoughts of good and not of evil, to give us an expected end* of our troubles.

Let us then betake ourſelves to the proper work of this day, hearty prayers and thankſgivings to almighty God, for the King and Queen, and for all that are in authority; that as he hath been pleaſed, by a wonderful providence, to reſcue us from the imminent danger we were in, and from all our fears, by the happy advancement of their Majeſties to the throne of theſe kingdoms; ſo he would, of his infinite goodneſs, ſtill preſerve and continue to us this *light of our eyes, and breath of our noſtrils*, princes of that great clemency and goodneſs, which render them the true repreſentatives of God upon earth, and the moſt gracious governors of men.

And let us earneſtly beſeech him, that *he would confirm and ſtrengthen them in all goodneſs*, and *make them wiſe as angels of God, to diſcern betwixt good and evil*, that *they may know how to go in and out before this great people*; that he would give them the united affections of their people, and a heart to ſtudy and ſeek their good all the days of their lives.

And, finally, that he would be pleaſed to continue ſo great a bleſſing to us, and to grant them a long and proſperous reign over us; and that their poſterity in this Royal family may endure for ever, *and their throne as the days of heaven*; that under them the people of theſe nations, we and the generations to come, *may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty*; for

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for his mercies ſake in Jeſus Chriſt, *who is King of kings, and Lord of lords.* To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour, glory, dominion and power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON LXXXV.

The love of God to men, in the incarnation of Chriſt.

Preached in the chapel of Lambeth houſe on Chriſtmas day 1691.

1 JOHN iv. 9.

In this was manifeſted the love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

THeſe words contain a clear and evident demonſtration of the love of God to us: *In this was manifeſted the love of God towards us,* (that is, By this it plainly appears, that God had a mighty love for us), *that he ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* In which we may conſider this threefold evidence of God's love to mankind.

1. That he ſhould be pleaſed to take our caſe into conſideration, and to concern himſelf for our happineſs.

2. That he ſhould deſign ſo great a benefit to us, which is here expreſſed by *life: That we might live through him.*

3. That he was pleaſed to uſe ſuch a means for the obtaining and procuring of this benefit for us: He *ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* Each of theſe ſingly is a great evidence of God's love to us, much more all of them together.

I. It is a great evidence of the love of God to mankind, that he was pleaſed to take our caſe into conſideration, and to concern himſelf for our happineſs. Nothing does more commend an act of kindneſs, than if there

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there be great condescension in it. We use to value a small favour, if it be done to us by one that is far above us, more than a far greater done to us by a mean and inconsiderable person. This made David to break out into such admiration, when he considered the ordinary providence of God towards mankind: *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him! or the son of man, that thou shouldst consider him!* This is a wonderful condescension indeed, for God to be mindful of man.

At the best we are but his creatures, and upon that very account at an infinite distance from him; so that, were not he infinitely good, he would not be concerned for us, who are so infinitely beneath the consideration of his love and pity. Neither are we of the highest rank of creatures; we are much below the angels, as to the excellency and perfection of their beings: so that if God had not had a peculiar pity and regard to the sons of men, he might have placed his affection and care upon a much nobler order of creatures than we are, and so much the more miserable, because they fell from a higher step of happiness; I mean the lost angels: but yet, for reasons best known to his infinite wisdom, God passed by them, and was pleased to consider us. This the Apostle to the Hebrews takes notice of, as an argument of God's peculiar and extraordinary love to mankind, that he *sent his Son, not to take upon him the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abraham.*

Now that he, who is so far above us, and after that we by wilful transgression had lost ourselves, had no obligation to take care of us, but what his own goodness laid upon him; that he should concern himself so much for us, and be so solicitous for our recovery; this is a great evidence of his kindness and good-will to us, and cannot be imagined to proceed from any other cause.

II. Another evidence of God's great love to us, is, that he was pleased to design so great a benefit for us. This the scripture expresseth to us by *life*; and it is usual in scripture to express the best and most desirable things by *life*; because, as it is one of the greatest blessings, so it is the foundation of all other enjoyments: and therefore the Apostle useth but this one word to express to us all the blessings and benefits of Christ's coming into the world:

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world: *God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

And the expression is very proper in our case, because *life* signifies the reparation of all that which was lost by the fall of man. For man, by his wilful degeneracy and apostasy from God, is sunk into a state of sin and misery; both which the scripture is wont to express by *death.* In respect of our sinful state, we are spiritually dead; and in respect of the punishment and misery due to us for our sins, we are judicially dead, dead in law; for *the wages of sin is death.* Now, God hath sent his Son into the world, that in both these respects *we might live through him.*

1. We were spiritually dead; *dead in trespasses and sins,* as the Apostle speaks, Eph. ii. 1. 2. *You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past ye walked, according to the course of this world.* Every wicked man, though in a natural sense he be alive, yet in a moral sense he is dead. So the Apostle, speaking of those who *live in* sinful lusts and *pleasures,* says of them, that they are *dead while they live,* 1 Tim. v. 6. What corrupt humours are to the body, that sin is to the soul, their disease and their death. Now, God sent his Son to deliver us from this death, by renewing our nature, and mortifying our lusts; by restoring us to the life of grace and holiness, and *destroying the body of sin in us, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* And that this is a great argument of the mighty love of God to us, the Apostle tells us, Eph. ii. 4. 5. *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.* It is an argument of the richness of God's mercy, and of his great love to us, to recover us out of this sad and deplorable case. It is a kindness infinitely greater, than to redeem us from the most wretched slavery, or to rescue us from the most dreadful and cruel temporal death; and yet we should value this as a favour and benefit that could never be sufficiently acknowledged: but God hath sent his Son to deliver us from a worse bondage, and a more dreadful kind of death; so that well might the Apostle ascribe this great deliverance of mankind from the slavery of our lusts, and the death of sin,

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to the boundleſs mercy and love of God to us: *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Chriſt, even when we were dead in ſins;* when our caſe was as deſperate as could well be imagined, then was God pleaſed to undertake this great cure, and to provide ſuch a remedy, as cannot fail to be effectual for our recovery, if we will but make uſe of it.

2. We were likewiſe judicially dead, dead in law, being condemned by the juſt ſentence of it. So ſoon as ever we ſinned, eternal death was by the ſentence of God's law become our due portion and reward; and this being our caſe, God, in tender commiſeration and pity to mankind, was pleaſed to ſend his Son into the world, to interpoſe between the juſtice of God and the demerits of men; and by reverſing the ſentence that was gone out againſt us, and procuring a pardon for us, to reſcue us from the miſery of eternal death; and not only ſo, but, upon the condition of faith and repentance, of obedience and a holy life, to beſtow eternal life upon us; and by this means, to reſtore us to a better condition than that from which we were fallen, and to advance us to a happineſs greater than that of innocency.

And was not this great love, to deſign and provide ſo great a benefit and bleſſing for us, to *ſend his Son Jeſus to bleſs us, in turning away every one of us from our iniquities?* Our bleſſed Saviour, who came from the boſom of his Father, and knew his tender affection and compaſſion to mankind, ſpeaks of this as a moſt wonderful and unparallelled expreſſion of his love to us, John iii. 16. *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. God ſo loved the world,* ſo greatly, ſo ſtrangely, ſo beyond our biggeſt hopes, nay, ſo contrary to all reaſonable expectation, *as to ſend his only begotten Son, to ſeek and to ſave* the ſinful ſons of men.

If it had only in general been declared to us, that God was about to ſend his Son into the world upon ſome great deſign, and been left to us to conjecture what his errand and buſineſs ſhould be; how would this have alarmed the guilty conſciences of ſinful men, and filled them with infinite jealouſies and ſuſpicion, with fearful expectations of *wrath and fiery indignation to conſume them?*

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them? For considering the great wickedness and degeneracy of mankind, what could we have thought, but that surely God was sending his Son upon a design of vengeance, to chastise a sinful world, to vindicate the honour of his despised laws, and to revenge the multiplied affronts which had been offered to the highest Majesty of heaven, by his pitiful and ungrateful creatures? Our own guilt would have been very apt to have filled us with such imaginations as these; that in all likelihood the Son of God was coming to judgment, to call the wicked world to an account, to proceed against his Father's rebels, to pass sentence upon them, and to execute the vengeance which they had deserved. This we might justly have dreaded; and indeed, considering our case, how ill we have deserved at God's hands, and how highly we have provoked him, what other weighty matter could we hope for?

But the goodness of God hath strangely outdone our hopes, and deceived our expectation. So it follows in the next words, *God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world,* (intimating, that this we might justly have imagined and feared), *but* upon a quite contrary design, *that through him the world might be saved.* What a surprise of kindness is here! that instead of *sending his Son to condemn us,* he should *send him into the world to save us;* to rescue us from the jaws of death and of hell, from that eternal and intolerable misery which we had incurred and deserved!

And if he had proceeded no farther, this had been wonderful mercy and kindness: but his love stopped not here; it was not contented to spare us, and free us from misery; but was restless till it had found out a way to bring us to happiness: for *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,* not only *that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish,* but *might have everlasting life.* This is the second evidence of God's great love to us, the greatness of the blessing and benefit which he had designed and provided for us; *that we might live through him;* not only be delivered from spiritual and eternal death, but be made partakers of eternal life.

III. The last evidence of God's great love to us which I mentioned was this, that God was pleased to use such

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a means for the obtaining and procuring of this great bleſſing and benefit: He *ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* And this will appear to be great love indeed, if we conſider theſe four things.

1. The perſon whom he was pleaſed to employ upon this deſign: He *ſent his only begotten Son.*

2. How much he abaſed him, in order to the effecting and accompliſhing of this deſign; implied in theſe words, He *ſent him into the world.*

3. If we conſider to whom he was ſent; to *the world.* And,

4. That he did all this voluntarily and freely, out of his mere pity and goodneſs; not conſtrained hereto by any neceſſity, not prevailed upon by any [illegible] or importunity of ours, nor obliged by any [illegible] kindneſs from us.

1. Let us conſider the perſon whom God was pleaſed to employ in this deſign: He *ſent his only begotten Son;* no leſs perſon than *his own Son,* and no leſs dear to him, than *his only begotten Son.*

1*ſt*, No leſs perſon than *his own Son.* And the dignity of the perſon that was employed in our behalf, doth ſtrangely heighten and ſet off the kindneſs. What an endearment is it of the mercy of our redemption, that God was pleaſed to employ upon this deſign no meaner perſon than *his own Son, his begotten Son?* So he is called in the text, *his Son,* in ſo peculiar a manner as no creature is or can be. The creatures below man are called *the works of God,* but never his *children:* the angels are in ſcripture called *the ſons of God;* and Adam likewiſe is called *the ſon of God,* becauſe God made him after his own image and likeneſs, in holineſs and righteouſneſs, and in his dominion and ſovereignty over the creatures below him: but this title of *begotten Son of God* was never given to any of the creatures, man or angel: *For unto which of the angels ſaid he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* as the Apoſtle reaſons, Heb. i. 5. He muſt be a great perſon indeed to whom this title belongs, of *the begotten Son of God;* and it muſt be a mighty love indeed which moved God to employ ſo great a perſon on the behalf of ſo pitiful and wretched

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wretched creatures as we are. It had been a mighty condescension for God to treat with us at all; but that no less person than his *own Son* should be the ambassador, is an astonishing regard of heaven to poor sinful dust and ashes.

2*dly*, The person was as dear to God as he was great; he was *his only begotten Son.* It had been a great instance of Abraham's love and obedience to God, to have sacrificed a son at his command; but this circumstance makes it much greater, that it was his *only son: Hereby I know that thou fearest God,* (says the angel), *since thou hast not with-held thy son, thine only son from me.* This is a demonstration that God loved us at a stupendous rate, when he would send *his only begotten Son* into the world for us.

Before this, God had tried several ways with mankind, and employed several messengers to us: sometimes he sent his angels, and many times his servants the prophets; but *in these last days he hath sent his Son.* He had many more servants to have employed upon this message, but he had but one Son; and rather than mankind should be ruined and lost, he would send him. Such was the love of God towards us, that rather than our recovery should not be effected, he would employ in this work the greatest and dearest person to him both in heaven and earth, *his only begotten Son: In this was the love of God manifested, that he sent his only begotten Son, that we might live through him.*

2. Let us consider how much this glorious and excellent person was abased, in order to the effecting and accomplishing of this design, which is here expressed by *sending him into the world;* and this comprehends his incarnation, with all the mean and abasing circumstances of it. This the Apostle declares fully to us, Phil. ii. 6. 7. though *he was in the form of God,* (that is, truly and really God), *yet he made himself of no reputation,* (ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε, *he emptied himself,* was contented to be strangely lessened and diminished), *and took upon him the form of a servant,* (or slave), *and was made in the likeness of men:* that is, did really assume human nature. Here was an abasement indeed, for God to become man, for *the only begotten Son of God to take upon him the form of a*

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servant, and to become obedient to death, even the death of the cross; which was the death of slaves, and infamous malefactors. Here was love indeed, that God was willing that his own dear Son should be thus obscured and diminished, and become so mean and so miserable for our sakes; that he should not only stoop to be *made man,* and to *dwell among us,* but that he should likewise submit to *the infirmities of our nature,* and to be *made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted;* that he should be contented to bear so many affronts and indignities from perverse and unthankful men, and to *endure such contradiction of sinners against himself;* that he who *was the brightness of his Father's glory,* should be *despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs;* and rather than we should perish, should put himself into our place, and be contented to suffer and die for us; and that God should be willing that all this should be done to *his only Son,* to save sinners. What greater testimony could he give of his love to us?

3. Let us consider farther to whom he was sent, which is also implied in these words, *He sent his son into the world;* into a wicked world, that was altogether unworthy of him; and an ungrateful world, that did most unworthily use him.

1*st,* Into a wicked world, that was altogether unworthy of him, that had deserved no such kindness at his hands. For what were we, that God should send such a person amongst us; that he should make his son stoop so low, as to dwell in our nature, and to become one of us? We were rebels and enemies, enemies to God by evil works, up in arms against heaven, and at open defiance with God our maker. When the world was in this posture of enmity and hostility against God, then he sent his Son to treat with us, and to offer us peace. What can more commend the love of God than this, that he should shew such kindness to us, when we were sinners and enemies? Herein *God hath commended his love towards us,* (says the Apostle, Rom. v. 8.), *in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

2*dly,* Into an ungrateful world, that did most unworthily use him; that gave no becoming entertainment to him; *The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests;*

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nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay his head; that heaped all manner of contumelies and indignities upon him; that persecuted him all his life, and at last put him to a most painful and shameful death: in a word, that was so far from receiving him as the Son of God, that they did not treat him with common humanity, and like one of the sons of men.

4. He did all this voluntarily and freely: *God sent his Son into the world, mero motu,* "of his own mere "grace and goodness;" moved by nothing but his own bowels, and the consideration of our misery; not overpowered by any force; (for what could offer violence to him to *whom all power belongs?*) not constrained by any necessity; for he had been happy, though we had remained for ever miserable: he might have chosen other objects of his love and pity, and have left us involved in that misery which we had wilfully brought upon ourselves.

Nor was he prevailed upon by any application from us, or importunity of ours to do this for us. Had we been left to have contrived the way of our recovery, this which God hath done for us, could never have entered into the heart of man to have imagined, much less to have desired it at his hands. If the way of our salvation had been put into the hands of our own counsel and choice, how could we have been so impudent as to have begged of God, that *his only Son* might descend from heaven, and *become man;* be poor, despised, and miserable, for our sakes. God may stoop as low as he pleaseth, being secure of his own majesty and greatness; but it had been a boldness in us, not far from blasphemy, to have desired of him to condescend to such a submission.

Nor, lastly, was he preobliged by any kindness or benefit from us; so far from that, that we had given him all possible provocation to the contrary, and had reason to expect the effect of his heaviest displeasure: and yet, though he was the *pars læsa,* "the party that "had been disobliged and injured;" though we were first in the offence and provocation, he was pleased to make the first overtures of peace and reconciliation; and though it was wholly our concernment, and not

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his; yet he was pleased to condescend so far to our perverseness and obstinacy, as to *send his Son to us*, and to *beseech us to be reconciled.*

Now herein, (says the Apostle immediately after the text), *herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins:* Herein is the love of God manifested, that the kindness began on his part, and not on ours; that, being neither obliged nor desired by us, he did freely, and of his own accord, *send his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

What now remains, but to apply this to ourselves?

1. Let us propound to ourselves the love of God for our pattern and example. This is the inference which the Apostle makes in the next verse but one after the text, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* One would have thought the inference should have been, *If God so loved us, that we ought also to love him.* But the Apostle doth not speak so much of the affection as the effect of love; and his meaning is, If God hath bestowed such benefits upon us, we ought, in imitation of him, to be kind and beneficial one to another. Not but that we ought to *love God with all our hearts, and souls, and strength;* but in this sense we are not capable of it. We cannot be beneficial to him; because he is self-sufficient, and stands in need of nothing: and therefore the Apostle adds this as a reason why he does not exhort men to love God, but one another, *No man hath seen God at any time;* he is not sensible to us, and therefore none of these sensible things can signify any thing to him. But he hath friends and relations here in the world, who are capable of the sensible effects of our love, and to whom we may shew kindness for his sake: we cannot be beneficial to God, but we may testify our love to him by our kindness and charity to men, who are made after the image of God; and if we see any one miserable, that is consideration enough to move our charity. There was nothing but this in us to move him to pity us, *when we were in our blood, and no eye pitied us.*

God is a pattern of the most generous kindness and charity. Though he be infinitely above us, yet he thought

thought it not below him to consider our case, and to employ his only Son to save us: he had no obligation to us, no expectation of advantage from us, and can never be in a possibility to stand in need of us; and yet he loved us, and hath conferred the greatest benefits upon us; so that no man can have deserved so ill at our hands, but that if he be in want, and we in a condition to help him, he ought to come within the compass and consideration of our charity.)

And this is the proper season for it, when we commemorate the greatest blessing and benefit that was ever conferred on mankind, *The Son of God sent into the world*, on purpose *to* redeem and *save us*. And therefore I cannot but very much commend the custom of feeding and relieving the poor; more especially at this time, when the poor do usually stand most in need of it, and when we commemorate *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who being rich became poor for our sakes, that we through his poverty might be made rich.*

2. Let us readily comply with the great design of this great love of God to mankind: *He hath sent his Son, that we may live through him.* But though he hath done all this for us; though he hath purchased so great blessings for us, as the pardon of our sins, and power against them, and eternal life and happiness; yet there is something to be done on our parts, to make us partakers of these benefits. God hath not so loved us, as to send his Son into the world, to carry men to heaven whether they will or no; and to rescue those from the slavery of the devil, and the damnation of hell, who are fond of their fetters, and wilfully run themselves upon ruin and destruction. But the Son of God came to offer happiness to us, upon certain terms and conditions, such as are fit for God to propound, and necessary for us to perform, to make us capable of the blessedness which he offers; as, namely, *repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;* a sincere and constant endeavour of obedience to the laws and precepts of our holy religion.

These are the terms of the gospel, and *the grace of God which bringeth salvation*, offers it only upon these terms, that we *deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and live soberly,*

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ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world: then we may *expect the bleſſed hope.* But if we will not ſubmit to theſe conditions, the Son of God will be no Saviour to us; for *he is the author of eternal ſalvation* only *to them that obey him.* If men will continue in their ſins, the redemption wrought by Chriſt will be of no advantage to them. Such as obſtinately perſiſt in an impenitent courſe, *ipſa ſi velit ſalus, ſervare non poteſt;* "Sal-"vation itſelf cannot ſave them."

Theſe are the conditions of our happineſs; and if we ſubmit to them, we are *heirs of eternal life;* if we refuſe, we are *ſons of perdition,* eternally loſt and undone: for we may aſſure ourſelves, that theſe are the beſt and eaſieſt terms that can ever be offered to us, becauſe God ſent them by *his Son.* This is the laſt effort of the divine love and goodneſs towards the recovery and ſalvation of men. So the Apoſtle tells us, Heb. i. 1. 2. that *God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake to the fathers by the prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son.* And if we refuſe to hear him, he will ſpeak no more. After this it is not to be expected that God ſhould make any farther attempts for our recovery; for he can ſend no greater nor dearer perſon to us than *his own Son.* And if we refuſe him, whom will we reverence? If after this we ſtill wilfully go on in our ſins, *there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin; but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to conſume us.*

3. With what joy and thankfulneſs ſhould we commemorate this great love of God to mankind, in *ſending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him!*

This is the proper end of the bleſſed ſacrament which we are now going to receive, to repreſent to our minds the incarnation and paſſion of our dear Lord, by the ſymbols of his body broken and his blood ſhed for us. With what acknowledgments ſhould we celebrate the memory of this wonderful love which the Son of God hath ſhewn to the ſons of men; endeavouring to make all the world in love with him, who hath ſo loved all mankind!

Whenever we ſee his blood poured forth, and his body broken for us, ſo moving a ſight ſhould raiſe ſtrange paſſions

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passions in us of love to our Saviour, and hatred to our sins; and should inspire us with mighty resolutions of service and obedience to him; and whenever the pledges and seals of these benefits are delivered into our hands, the sight of them should at once wound and revive our hearts, and make us to cry out, "Lord, how unworthy "am I for whom thou shouldst do and suffer all this! I "am overcome by thy love, and can no longer hold "out against the mighty force of such kindness! I ren- "der myself to thee, and will serve thee for ever, who "hast redeemed me at so dear a rate."

Now to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain, to God even our Father, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth; unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The end of the Fourth Volume.

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